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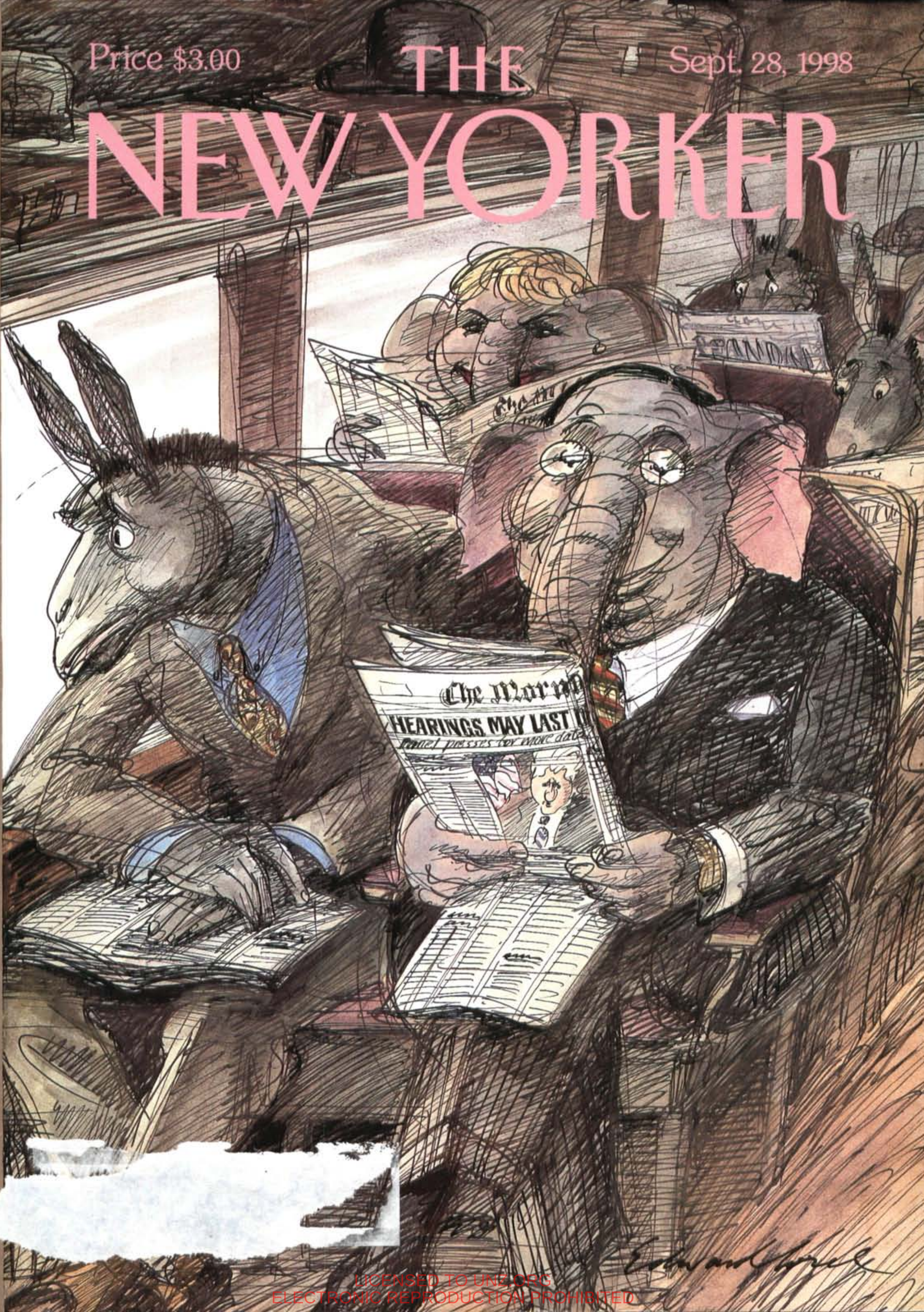
Sept. 28, 1998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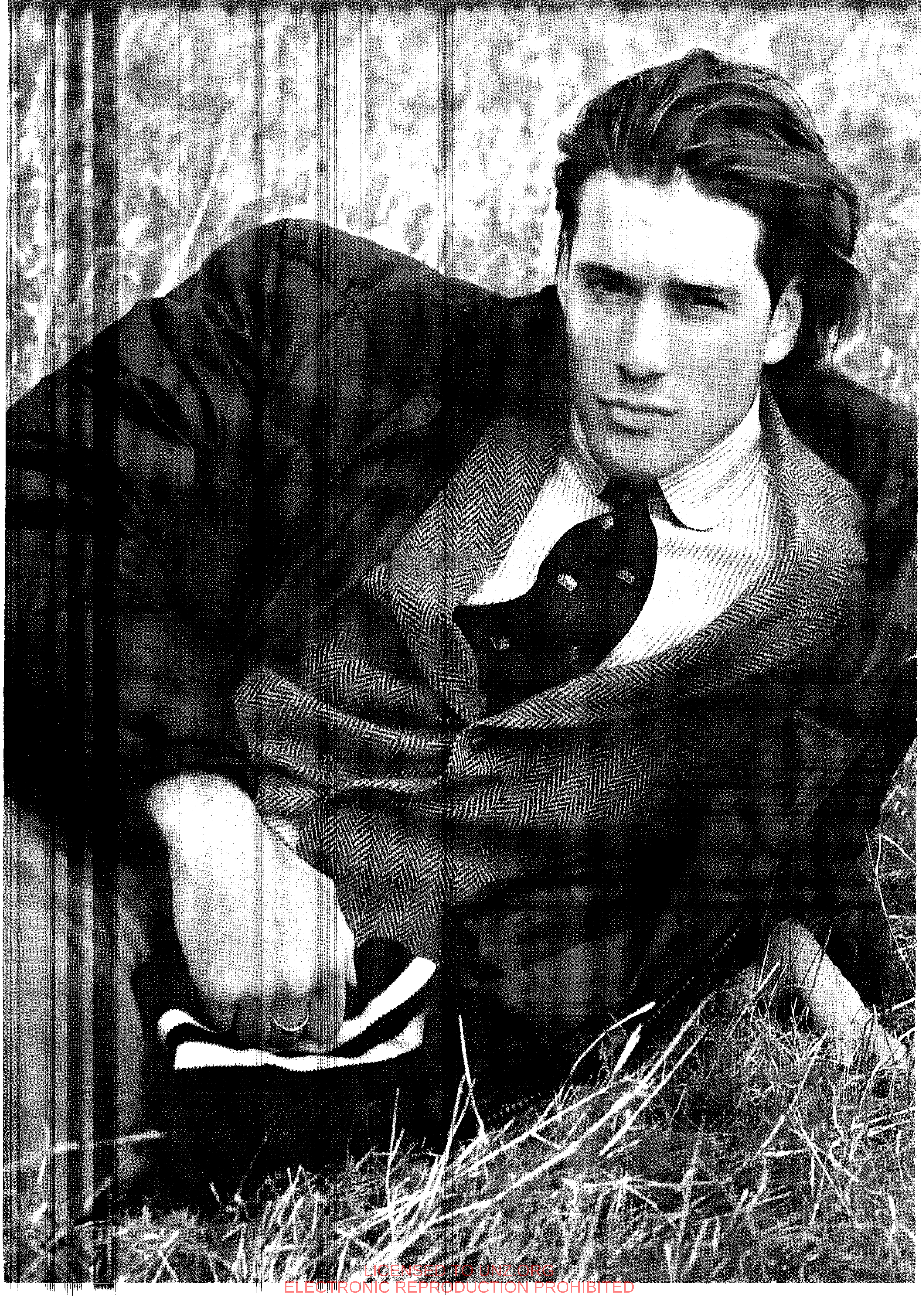

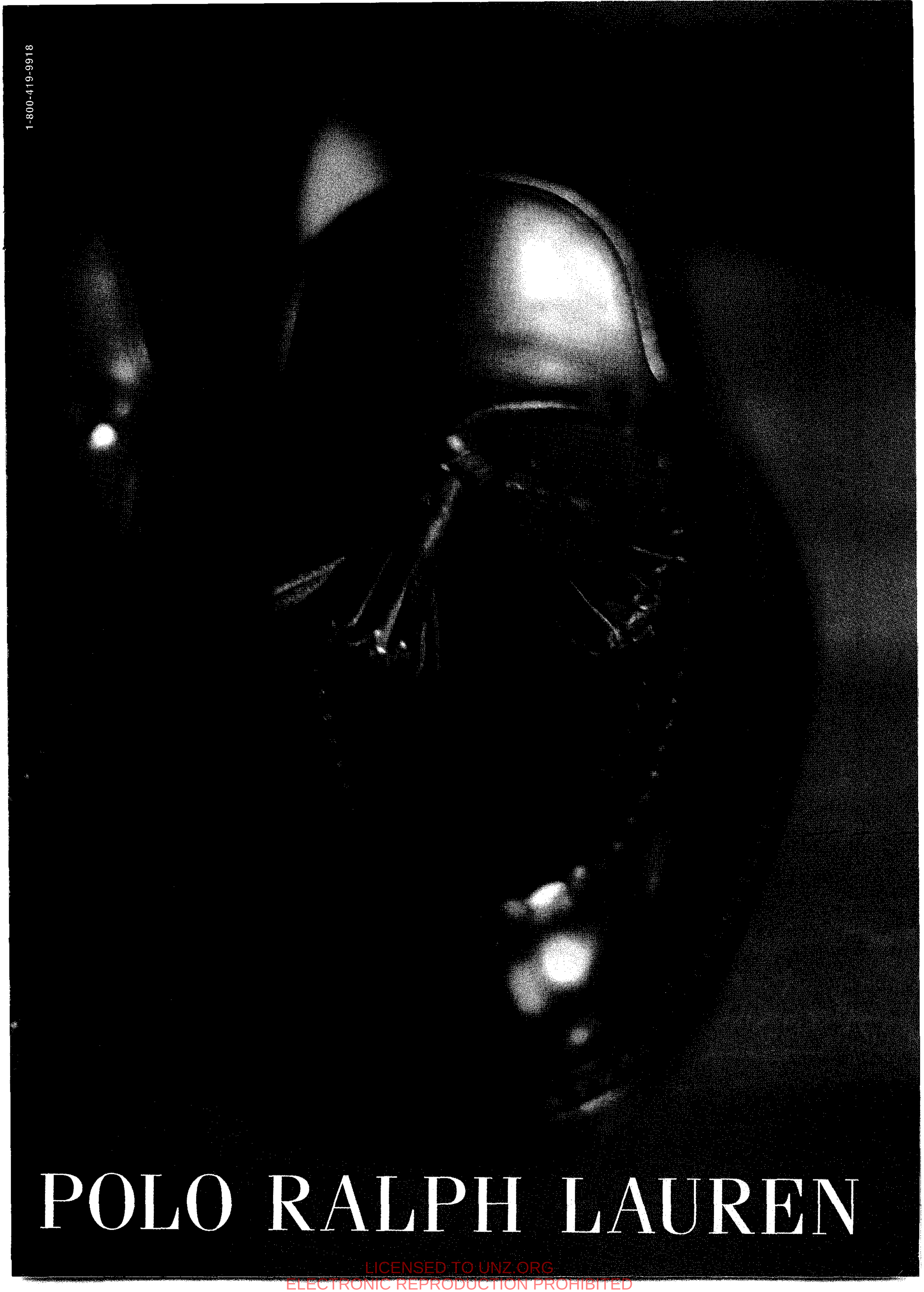
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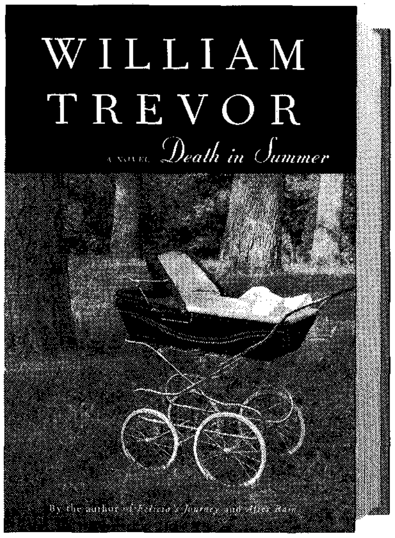
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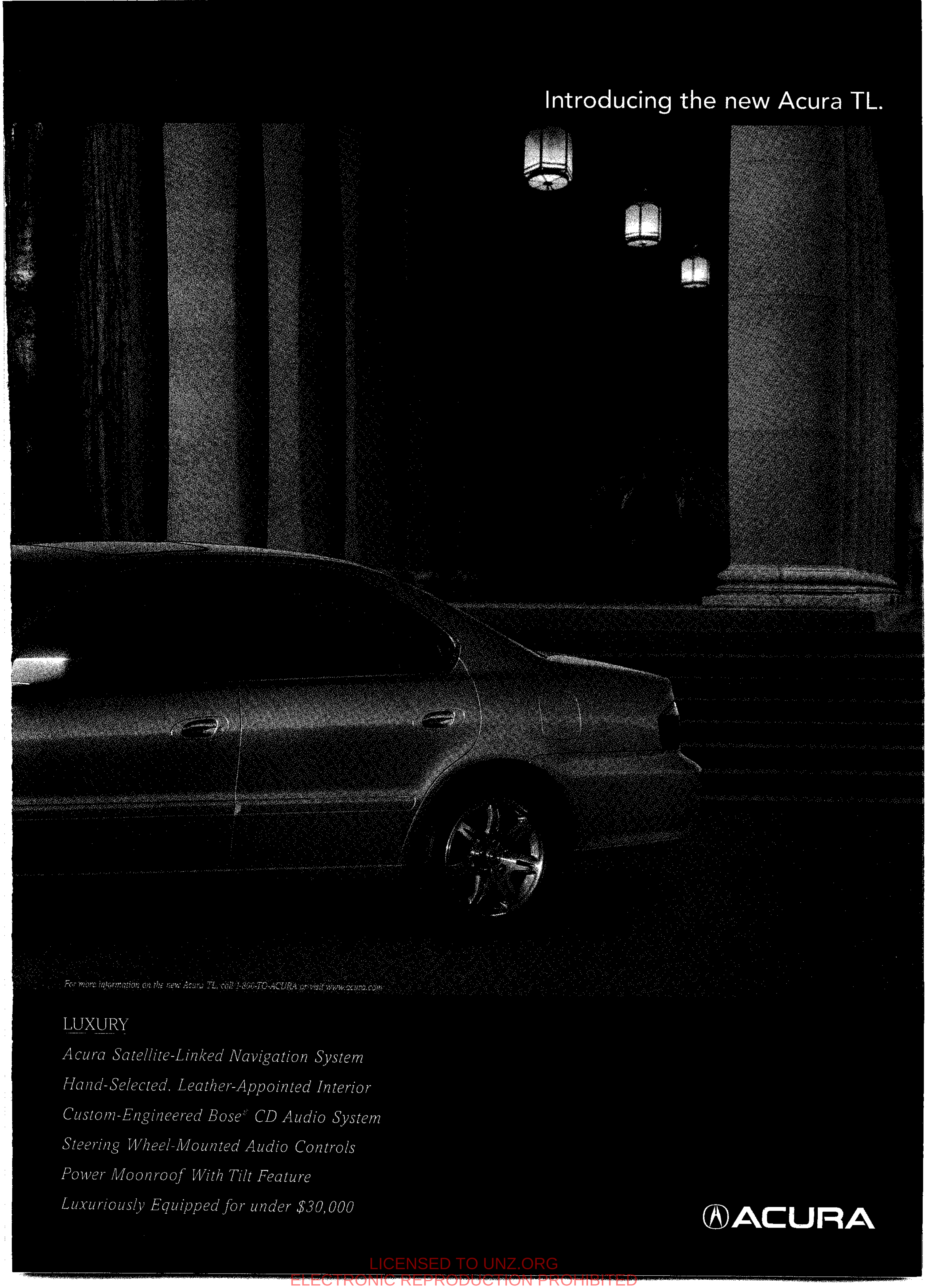

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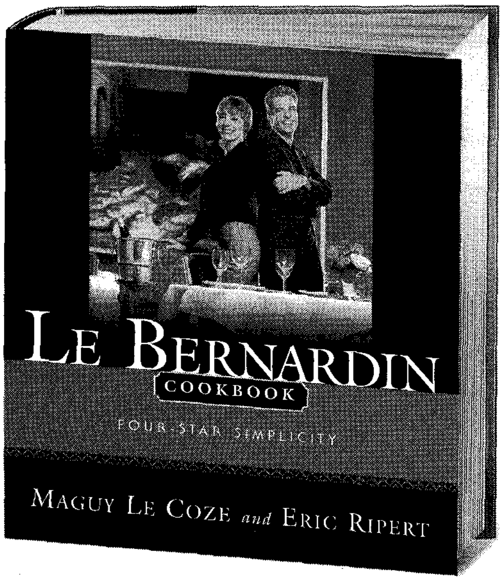

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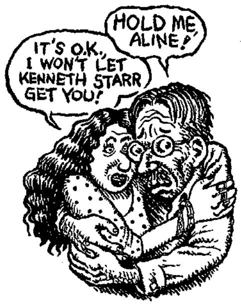
CONTRIBUTORS

MICHAEL IGNATIEFF ("First Loves," p. 60) is a London-based writer and historian whose most recent book, "The Warrior's Honor," was published in February. His friendship with Isaiah Berlin spanned the decade preceding Berlin's death, in 1997.

JEFFREY ROSEN ("Jurisprurience," p. 34), a staff writer since 1997, is an associate professor at the George Washington University Law School. He lives in Washington, D.C.

ALINE AND R. CRUMB (Comic Strip, p. 87) are both cartoonists and have been collaborating since 1974, when they published the book "Dirty Laundry." A documentary film based on the life of R. Crumb was released in 1995, and he has remained in hiding ever since.


HOLD ME ALINE!
IT'S O.K., I WON'T LET KENNETH STARR GET YOU!

DAPHNE MERKIN (The Current Cinema, p. 104) will be leaving the cinema column after this week to write regularly about books and to begin a new column about cultural and personal life.

JAY McINERNEY (Books, p. 96) has been a contributor to *The New Yorker* since 1993. He is the author of six novels, including "Model Behavior," which came out this month. He lives in New York and Tennessee.

ALEXANDER STILLE ("Library Privileges," p. 43) has written two books on Italian politics and culture, "Benevolence and Betrayal" and "Excellent Cadavers." Portions of the latter appeared in these pages.

EDWARD HIRSCH (Books, p. 100) is the author of five books of poetry, including "On Love," which was published this year. He was awarded a 1998 MacArthur Fellowship. ♦

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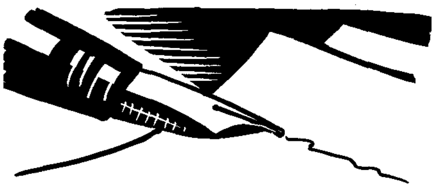


THE FINAL ANALYSIS

In "Man Goes to See a Doctor" (August 24th & 31st) Adam Gopnik showed that he "got it," even though he doesn't know what he got. His "Dr. Max Grosskurth" broke all the rules of traditional analysis—by falling asleep, being argumentative and dictatorial, giving "life advice"—and yet the analysis was ideal. Only an eighty-year-old analyst could pull this off, or the one named Sigmund Freud. Freud, too, broke all the rules—rules that he himself had established. Psychoanalysis, by the way, is not dead; it is coasting. It is watching all the quick-fix therapies fall on their butts. Psychoanalysis is the only method of therapy that is designed to make growth occur in the unconscious, which is the only place growth can take place.

JAMES T. JOYCE
Waynesville, N.C.

Mr. Gopnik repeated a story about the philosopher of religion Martin Buber that he was told by Dr. Grosskurth: that Buber "kept pornography on the lecture stand with him, in order to excite himself to a greater performance as a lecturer." As the author of "Martin Buber's Life and Work," I can state unconditionally that this is not true. Anyone who has ever seen Buber lecture would know that the story is preposterous; he would never let anything deflect him from the absolute concentration he brought to lecturing. Once, in fact, Buber noticed that some friends of his in the front row of one of his lectures looked tired. He discovered later that he had been lecturing for three hours!

MAURICE FRIEDMAN
Solana Beach, Calif.

TENNESSEE AND TRUMAN

There should be a postscript to the forgiving letter that Tennessee Williams wrote to Truman Capote after Capote had satirized him savagely in "Unspoiled Monsters" ("Last Stage," August 24th & 31st): when Capote's "Music for Chameleons" appeared, in 1980, it did so with the dedication "For Tennessee Williams."

LYLE LEVERICH
San Rafael, Calif.

STONE THE CRITIC

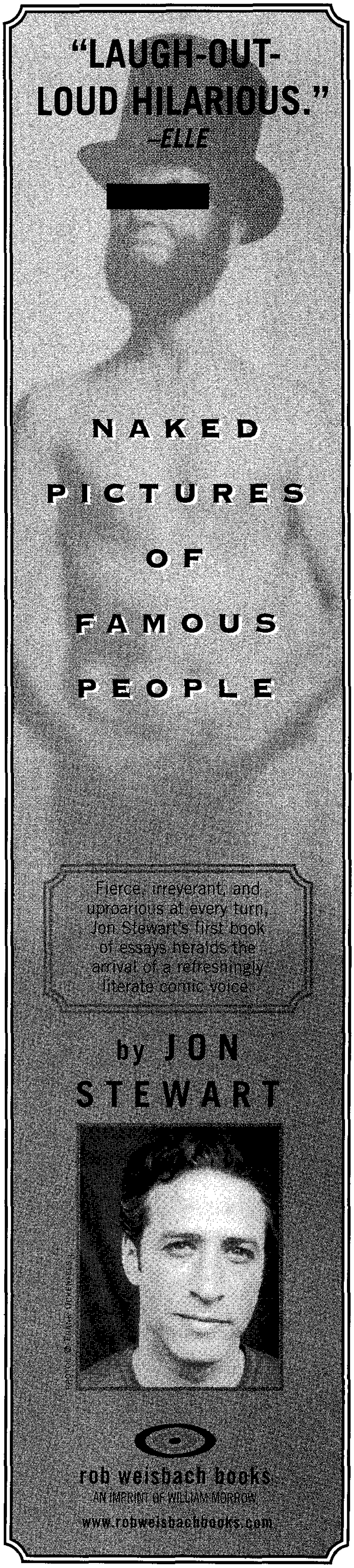
Daphne Merkin carps at Joyce Maynard for her supposedly self-serving memoir of her experience with J. D. Salinger ("Glass House," August 24th & 31st) and asks if we really want to know that Salinger whipped up homeopathic cures. Well, of course we do. It's exactly the kind of revealing detail that defines a personality. I came under the same kind of flak in 1983, when I published "Heartbreaker," an account of some months I spent with Judy Garland. If you've been involved with a notable figure you feel you have an obligation to record your experience, because you have a closeup that no one else does. Many critics don't realize this and will dismiss your work as exploitation, but Maynard's strikes me as sincere.

JOHN MEYER
New York City

I am not a fan of Joyce Maynard's writing, but I was surprised by the disingenuousness of Merkin's review. Merkin postulates that Maynard was attempting not only to reproach J. D. Salinger but to compete with him professionally. Merkin devotes a great deal of energy to scorning Maynard's character, and spends little on Maynard's prose or on whether it can compete with Salinger's. If what we think about Salinger's personal habits should not affect our estimation of his work, as Merkin suggests, then the way that Maynard has lived her life should not affect our views of hers. The sort of literary hair-pulling Merkin engages in with Maynard will only keep a "culture addicted to exposure" fascinated.

WENDY MOLYNEUX
Manhattan Beach, Calif.

Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number to "The Mail," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. They can also be faxed to 212-840-8489 or sent via E-mail to themail@newyorker.com. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium; we regret that owing to the volume of correspondence we cannot reply to every letter.



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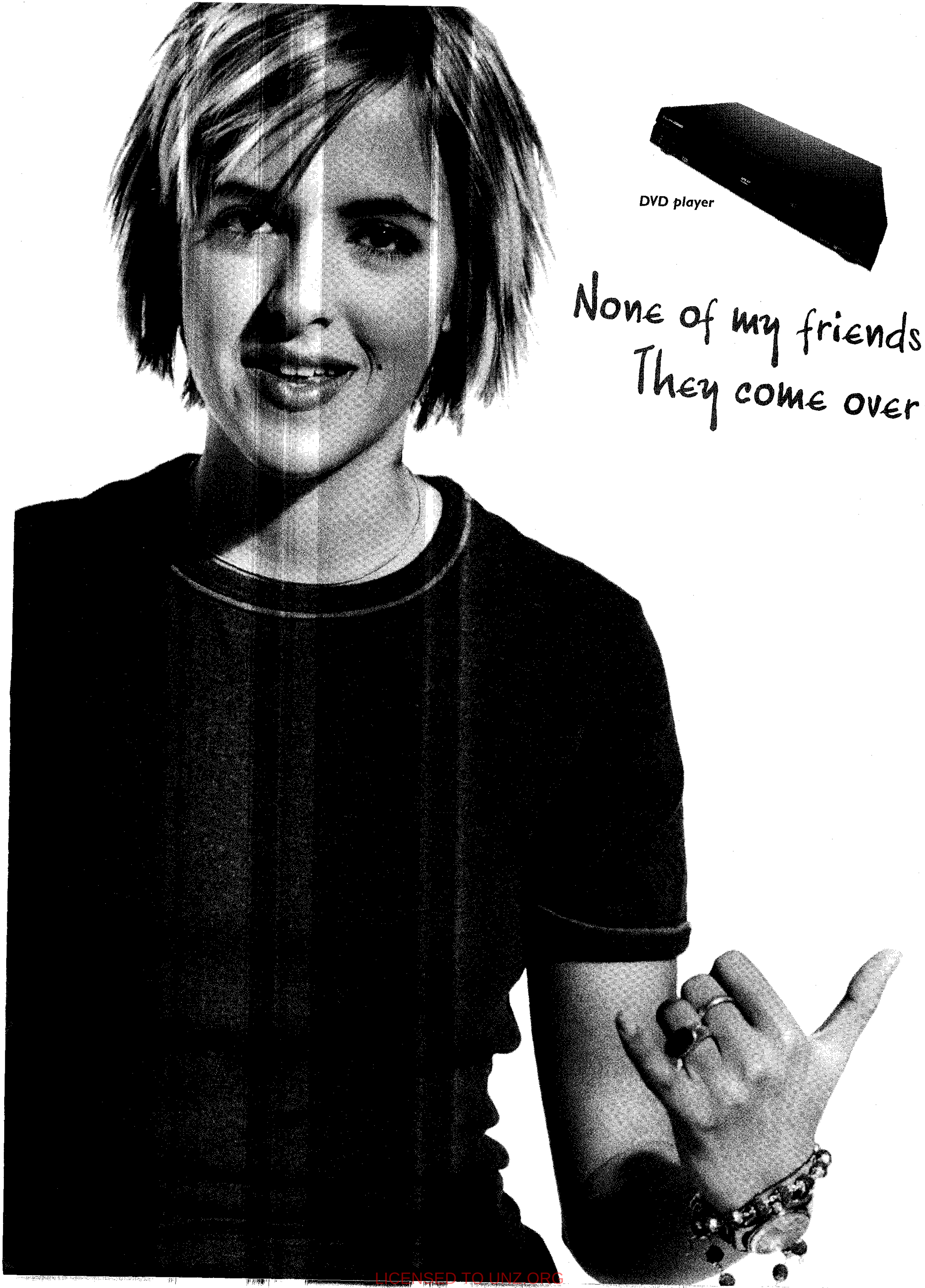
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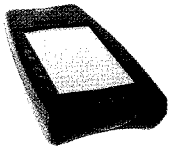

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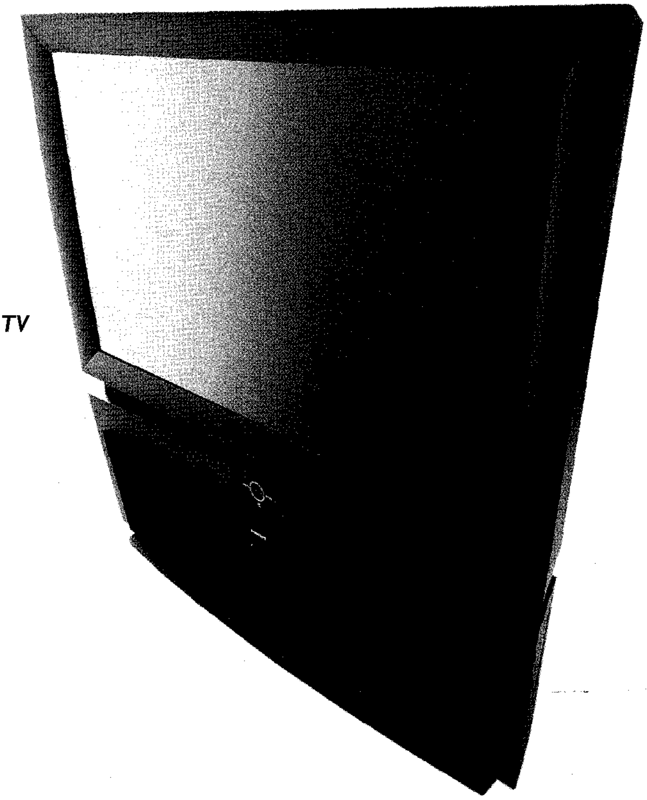

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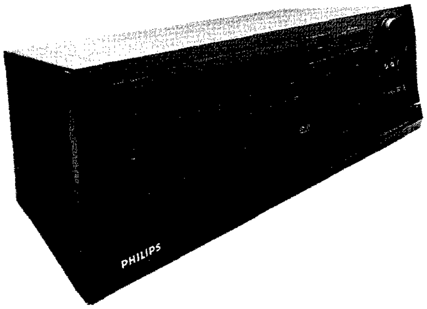

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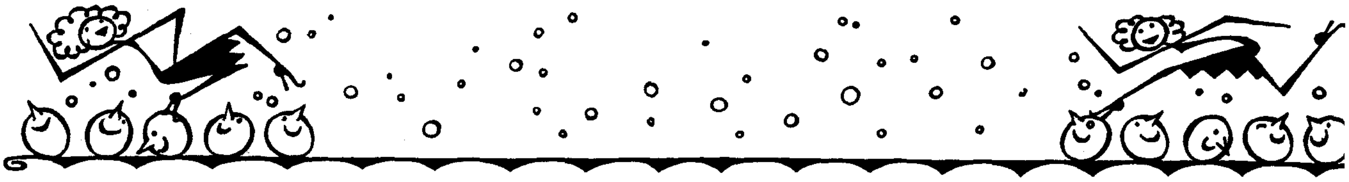


GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			23	24	25	26
27	28	29				

THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Billion Dollar Baby—The York Theatre Company wraps up its Musicals in Mufti series of overlooked works with a musical by Betty Comden and Adolph Green (book and lyrics) and Morton Gould (music), about a gold-digging chorus girl. Sept. 25 at 8, Sept. 26 at 2:30 and 8, and Sept. 27 at 2:30 and 7:30. (Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 935-5820.)

Chicago City Limits—The improv company presents a new revue, "Subpoenas Envy." Previews begin Sept. 23. (Chicago City Limits Theatre, First Ave. at 61st St. 888-5233.)

Corpus Christi—Terrence McNally's new drama tells the story of a young gay wayfarer on a spiritual journey with his twelve followers. Joe Mantello is the director. In previews. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

Hesh—From Naked Angels, a drama by Matthew Weiss that traces twenty years in the life of a troubled Bronx family. In previews through Sept. 26. Opens Sept. 27 at 8. (INTAR, 420 W. 42nd St. 479-7304.)

Impossible Marriage—Holly Hunter leads the cast of Beth Henley's new drama, set in Savannah, about a young woman's marriage to a philandering older man and how it affects their families. Previews begin Sept. 23. (Laura Pels, Broadway at 45th St. 719-1300.)

Inferno—Robert Pinsky has adapted for the stage his own translation of the first part of Dante's epic poem. Directed by Robert Scanlan. Presented by the 92nd Street Y Unterberg Poetry Center. In previews Sept. 26-27. Opens Sept. 28 at 8 and continues through Oct. 4. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 996-1100.)

Marco Polo Sings a Solo—The Signature Theatre Company opens its John Guare season with the playwright's 1977 comedy, in which a filmmaker, working on an iceberg at the end of the millennium, takes on the life story of the Italian explorer. In previews through Sept. 26. Opens Sept. 27 at 6:45. (555 W. 42nd St. 244-7529.)

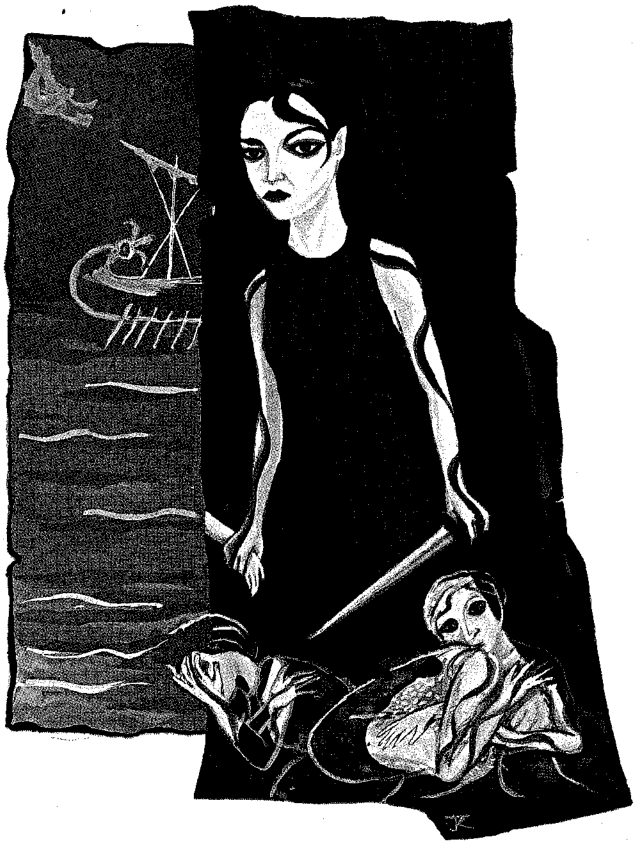
Measure for Measure—A Target Margin production of Shakespeare's comedy. Opens Sept. 23 at 8. (Connelly Theatre, 220 E. 4th St. 358-3657.)

Medea—The National Theatre of Greece is back in town to present Euripides' tragedy, with Karyofyllia Karabeti in the title role. Performances are in Greek with English supertitles. Sept. 23-25 at 8, Sept. 26 at 2 and 8, and Sept. 27 at 3. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212)

My Favorite Broadway: The Leading Ladies—A one-night-only benefit performance of popular show tunes, hosted by Julie Andrews and performed by stars including Nell Carter, Liza Minnelli, and Chita Rivera. Sept. 28 at 8. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800.)

The Mystery of Irma Vep—A revival of Charles Ludlam's 1984 camp thriller, directed by and starring Everett Quinton (who appeared with Ludlam in the original Ridiculous Theatrical Company production). Stephen DeRosa is also in the cast. With sets by John Lee Beatty and costumes by William Ivey Long. In previews. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

A Night in November—A one-man drama by Marie Jones, which is set on the night of the 1994 World Cup qualifying soccer match between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. In previews. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)



Karyofyllia Karabeti, in "Medea," at City Center.

Oedipus—Billy Crudup and Frances McDormand lead the cast in Dare Clubb's retelling of the Greek myth. A Blue Light Theatre Company production. In previews. (CSC Theatre, 136 E. 13th St. 279-4200.)

Over the River and Through the Woods—In Joe DiPietro's new comedy, a young man planning his future clashes with his four Italian-American grandparents, who have ideas of their own on the subject. In previews. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

Snapshots '98—An evening of one-acts from the Worth Street Theatre: "Imagining Brad," by Peter Hedges, and "The Cardinal Detoxes," by Tom Disch. Previews begin Sept. 24. (Tribeca Playhouse, 111 Reade St. 604-4195.)

Swan Lake—The British choreographer Matthew Bourne's he-swan interpretation of the Tchaikovsky ballet comes to Broadway. Previews begin Sept. 26. (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

'Til the Rapture Comes—A domestic drama set in a small West Virginia town, written by Edward Napier, a native of the state. In previews. (WPA Theatre, 519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523.)

The Uneasy Chair—The owner of a boarding house (Dana Ivey) in Victorian London sues her ill-tempered boarder (Roger Rees), in a new comedy by Evan Smith. In previews. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

Candida—The Pearl Theatre Company begins the season with Shaw's 1903 play about marriage. Clare Davidson is the director. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802. Closes Oct. 11.)

Caught in the Act—The Threshold Theatre's festival of international one-acts, by playwrights both well known (Arthur Schnitzler, Fernando Arrabal, Dario Fo) and obscure. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202. Closes Oct. 4.)

Collected Stories—In a splendid performance, Uta Hagen plays an aging writer who tells her protégée (Lorca Simons) the one story about her own life which she hasn't written. Complications, naturally, ensue. Unfortunately, other than providing a showcase for Ms. Hagen, this revival of Donald Margulies's 1997 drama only points out how poorly constructed the relationship between the two women is, and it is made even less believable by Ms. Simons' overly mannered, pouty acting. Directed by William Carden, with a marvellous, airy set by Ray Recht. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

Communicating Doors—A wonderful farce with a fairy-tale ending, by Alan Ayckbourn. As with all good farce, the central conceit is serious and quite ridiculous at the same time; in this case, it involves murder and time travel. An exuberant cast, led by the wittily unflappable Patricia Hodges and including Mary-Louise Parker and David McCallum, makes the most of David Gallo's lovely set (which has six doors, good for slamming, hiding behind, and hitting miscreants with). Christopher Ashley's direction makes the precise framework of the plot clear without ever dampening the high spirits. (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 13th St. 239-6200.)

Culture of Desire—Dante's "Inferno" and the life of Andy Warhol inspired the director Anne Bogart's play, her second installment in the Saratoga International Theatre Institute's two-part examination of American popular culture. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475.)

Dinah Was—Oliver Goldstick's play about the late blues singer Dinah Washington, starring Lillias White. (Gramercy Theatre, 127 E. 23rd St. 307-4100.)

A Dream of Wealth—Arthur Giron's drama about an American entrepreneur in Guatemala incorporates masks, music, and rit-

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ual movement. (46 Walker Street Theatre, 46 Walker St. 421-1380. Closes Oct. 11.)

The Dying Gaul—A five-week, encore staging of Craig Lucas's latest drama, in which a married Hollywood producer seduces a naïve young writer whose screenplay he wants to buy. (Vineyard Theatre, 108 E. 15th St. 353-3874.)

International Festival of Puppet Theatre—The biennial series of avant-garde works continues through Sept. 27, with twenty-eight productions—including "A Harlot's Progress," by New York's Theodora Skipitares; "Kwaidan," by Atlanta's Center for Puppetry Arts; "Ubu and the Truth Commission," by South Africa's Handspring Puppet Company; and "Short Stories," by Peru's Teatro Hugo & Ines—staged at seventeen venues throughout the city. (For more information about performances and venues, call 439-7529, ext. 1998.)

The Irish . . . and How They Got That Way—This revue by Frank McCourt is a generally good-natured if somewhat choppy amalgam of historical tidbits, quotations from letters and speeches, and Irish songs from the past two centuries. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

Nijinsky Speaks—A one-man memory play, written and performed by Leonard Crofoot, in which the celebrated dancer looks back on his life from the confines of an insane asylum. (Harold Clurman, 412 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.)

Nunsense A-Men—An all-male version of Dan Goggin's 1985 musical comedy, "Nunsense." (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

Power Plays—Three short plays, two written by Elaine May and one by Alan Arkin, who originally performed them with Jeannie Berlin and Anthony Arkin, their respective offspring. Richard Benjamin and Paula Prentiss have taken over for Alan Arkin and Ms. May. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

Sakina's Restaurant—Aasif Mandvi portrays six characters in his one-man exploration of the South Asian community in New York. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

The Secret History of the Lower East Side—En Garde Arts continues its tradition of site-specific stagings with an evening of commissioned one-acts ("The Patron Saint of the Nameless Dead," by Carlos Murillo; "New Culture for a New Country," by Alice Tuan; and "Hester Street Hideaway: A Lower East Side Love Story," by Peter Ullian), performed on the roof of Seward Park High School and accompanied by a chorus of Lower East Siders and Seward Park students. Directed by Matt Wilder. (350 Grand St., at Essex St. 279-4200. Closes Oct. 4.)

The Sound of Music—Rebecca Luker is enormously winning as Maria, and the seven children in the cast are mostly endearing, but the production doesn't linger in the memory; there may be music in those hills, but the producers didn't seem to find a whole lot of fresh air up there. (Reviewed in our issue of 4/6/98.) (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Stupid Kids—The WPA Theatre's production of John C. Russell's dark comedy of suburban-teen angst. Michael Mayer is the director. (Century Theatre, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

Symphonie Fantastique—Abstract puppets underwater, set to the music of Berlioz. This isn't rubber-duckie performance art; just as dance can make space a palpable presence onstage, the show's creator, Basil Twist, uses feathers, streamers, mirrors, bubbles, and sophisticated lighting to do the same for water. And, as in dance, the movement illuminates the music. A peerless, delightful evening. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202.)

They Still Mambo in Havana—A political drama by Rogelio Martinez, in which Cuban exiles attempt to return to the homes of their dreams, only to find reality even stranger than they'd imagined. Vividly directed by Eduardo Machado. (The Flea, 41 White St., between Broadway and Church St. 226-0051. Closes Sept. 27.)

Vegetable Love—The 29th Street Rep presents a surrealistic drama about an Irish-American family in the aftermath of the father's death, written by Tammy Ryan. (212 W. 29th St. 465-0575. Closes Oct. 11.)

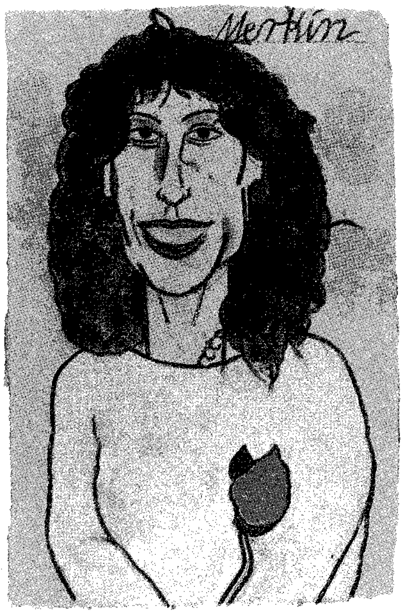
Villa Villa—Theatre as mosh pit. The Argentinean troupe De La Guarda herds you into a crowded space, performs undistinguished rock music, swings on ropes over your head, and splashes you until you're drenched. (Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200.)

The Weatherbox—Rattlestick Productions' season opener is a family drama by Travis Baker. (Theatre Off Park, 224 Waverly Pl., at 11th St. 675-5634. Closes Oct. 11.)

Wit—MCC Theatre presents the Long Wharf Theatre's staging of a dark comedy by Margaret Edson, in which a woman with cancer (Kathleen Chalfant) finds solace in the sonnets of John Donne. (120 W. 28th St. 727-7765. Closes Oct. 4.)

You Shouldn't Have Told—A drama about an urban, middle-class black family shaken by sexual abuse, written by Anne L. Thompson-Scretching. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

Zingaro—The French equestrian troupe returns to New York with "Eclipse," a new show featuring twenty-six horses, eighteen performers, and a Korean folk-music ensemble. (Big Top at Battery Park City. 718-636-4100.)



Meredith d'Ambrosio, at Zinno.

LONG RUNS

ART: Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **THE BEAUTY QUEEN OF LEENANE:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **BRING IN DA NOISE, BRING IN DA FUNK:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **CABARET:** Kit Kat Klub, 124 W. 43rd St. 719-1300. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CHICAGO:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY STRIKES BACK!:** Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200. . . . **HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH:** Jane Street Theatre, Hotel Riverview Ballroom, 113 Jane St. 239-6200. . . . **I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **JEKYLL & HYDE:** Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **LATE-NITE CATECHISM:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE LION KING:** New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **RAGTIME:** Ford Center for the Performing Arts, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **R & J:** John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 354-2220. . . . **RENT:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. . . . **THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL:** Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. . . . **SECRETS EVERY SMART TRAVELER SHOULD KNOW:** Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **TITANIC:** Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **VISITING MR. GREEN:** Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 505-0700. (Closes Oct. 4.)

DANCE

"Riverdance"—The fifty-one-member Irish step-dancing company stops by the home of the Rockettes for some high kicking of its own. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. Sept. 24-25 and Sept. 29 at 8 and Sept. 26-27 at 2 and 8. Through Oct. 11.)

Dayton Contemporary Dance Company—The African-American troupe celebrates its thirtieth-anniversary season with trademark reconstructions (including "Awassa Astrige/Ostrich," choreographed by Asadata Dafora in 1932, and "Prologue and Toccata," by Talley Beatty in 1960) and a new work, "Offering," by company choreographer Kevin Ward. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Sept. 22-25 at 8, Sept. 26 at 2 and 8, and Sept. 27 at 2 and 7:30.)

"Fase"—The Belgian choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, with her original partner, Michèle Anne De Mey, reprises for the last time the 1982 duet that made her minimalist reputation. In four sections, each set to a Steve Reich composition, the women repeat simple dance phrases (turning, spinning, stepping), imperceptibly edging in and out of unison. The repetitiveness develops, literally by turns, in two directions: daunting athleticism and mathematical austerity. And somehow each piece, without venturing far from the *froideur* it began with, manages to turn the slightest variations—the flick of a skirt, a sudden intake of breath—into moving character revelations. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Sept. 22-26 at 8.)

"Jazz Train"—The choreographer Donald Byrd and his ten-member company collaborate with drummer Max Roach, pianist Geri Allen, and guitarist Vernon Reid on a full-length work. (651 Arts Center at BAM's Majestic Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. For tickets, call 212-307-4100. Sept. 23 and Sept. 25-26 at 8.)

"Deeply There"—The nine members of the Joe Goode Performance Group blend dance, song, and story to relate tales of people who come together in San Francisco's Castro district as one young man dies of AIDS. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. Sept. 24-27 at 8:30.)

Dance from the World Music Institute—Three evenings of international song and dance. Sept. 24 at 8: Horn player Joe McPhee and his quintet join percussionist Adam Rudolph and dancer Oguri for a rare hybrid performance of jazz and Butoh. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330.) . . . ¶ Sept. 25 at 8: Dance and performance from Cuba and Puerto Rico, with Dos Alas, Grupo Afro Cuba de Matanzas, and Los Hermanos Cepeda. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400.) . . . ¶ Sept. 26 at 8: Music and dance of Romania, with Iza, a folk-dancing troupe from the Maramureş region, and multi-instrumentalist Dumitru Zamfira. (Symphony Space.)

National Acrobats of China—Flag dancing, plate spinning, unicycle sharing, contortionism by candlelight, and other skillful amusements dating back to the Han dynasty. (Lehman College Concert Hall, the Bronx. 718-960-8833. Sept. 27 at 2.)

Pilar Rioja—The contessa of Spanish dance returns for her twenty-sixth season. (Repertorio Español, Gramercy Arts Theatre, 138 E. 27th St. 889-2850. Sept. 23-24 and Sept. 27-29 at 7 and Sept. 25-26 at 8. Through Oct. 4.)

RICHARD MERKIN

NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

Mohammad Reza Shajarian—The Iranian master of classical Persian song. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. Sept. 23 at 8.)

Michael Feinstein—The pianist and singer plays Gershwin, backed by an orchestra and by George himself (on the player piano). (Fountain Plaza. Lincoln Center. Sept. 24 at 6. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Gershwin fans should also note the San Francisco Orchestra's appearance at Carnegie Hall on Sept. 23. (See Classical Music.)

Frank Kimbrough and Tim Otto—Pianist Kimbrough, a linchpin of the Jazz Composers Collective, has investigated the music of Herbie Nichols, Andrew Hill, and other unsung jazz masters, but his own work simmers with melodic intrigue and formal invention; he's close to an unsung hero himself. Tim Otto will lead a saxophone quartet featuring Peck Allmond and others. (New School, 55 W. 13th St. 995-1552. Sept. 24 at 8.)

Boyz II Men, Natalie Cole, Aretha Franklin, and Barry Manilow—Hosted by noted musicologist Tom Brokaw, this master class in, respectively, harmony, progeny, ecstasy, and schmaltz promises to be as interesting as the evening news. (Madison Square Garden. 307-7171. Sept. 24 at 8.)

Korn—California's latest contribution to bad spelling is an agro-metal collective that's fluent in hip-hop and hemp. The band's latest record, "Follow the Leader," enjoyed a brief moment at No. 1, but more sensible minds have since prevailed. Also on the program, the cleverly billed "Family Values" tour: Rammstein (German Expressionist metal with S & M overtones) and Ice Cube (the rapper turned actor/director). (Continental Airlines Arena, the Meadowlands. 212-307-7171. Sept. 25 at 7.)

New Power Soul—The artist formerly known as Prince presides over an evening of supercharged funk with Chaka Khan and Larry Graham. (Madison Square Garden. Sept. 25 at 8.)

Ravi and Anoushka Shankar—The sitar master performs with his seventeen-year-old daughter. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Sept. 25 at 8.)

Tito Puente—The timbales king was there when Latin music gained a foothold on the American consciousness back in the late forties, he stuck by it through the lean years, and, with the music's resurgence, he's still here, whipping dancers into a frenzy and driving concert audiences into the aisles to boogie. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. Sept. 26 at 8.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—The chanteuse **mary cleere haran** is in through Oct. 10, with a tribute to George Gershwin. Dining.

Birdland, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—Having found the intersection where the poetry of Thelonious Monk and spicy Latin currents meet, **danilo perez** (Sept. 23-24) speaks a new piano dialect with assurance and wit. Like the more accomplished of his piano-playing peers (Jacky Terrasson, Cyrus Chestnut), Perez is as concerned with developing a distinct trio conception as he is with his own dazzling playing. Sept. 25-26: The **john abercrombie** quartet. Somewhere in the past decade Abercrombie got in touch with his inner guitar hero. The muscle that had always shaded his playing came to the fore, and the ethereality of his early ECM recordings took a back seat. Abercrombie still exhibits a soft touch at times, with a Jim Hall-like sensitivity to harmony and tone, but when he wants to open up the floodgates and just blow, watch out. He's brought in downtown violin hero **mark feldman** to augment his band for this engagement. The big-band composer and arranger **maria schneider** (Sept. 29) had a nice setup for the past few years at Visiones, leading her plush, modern ensemble every Monday night. With that club's demise, things looked iffy, but Schneider is back on her feet. A Gil Evans disciple, this ingenious orchestrator weaves thick textures while reserving plenty of space for some choice soloists.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through Sept. 27: The **gerry mulligan all-star tribute band** has a brilliant alto saxophonist (Lee Konitz), an exceptional trumpeter (Randy Brecker), and a canny trombonist (Bob Brookmeyer)—what they don't have is a baritone saxophonist. Considering that no one has yet captured Mulligan's silken tone and chiselled melodicism on that instrument, their decision is probably for the best. Backed by Mulligan's last rhythm section, the horn players romp through some of the more inventive and delightful tunes associated with the avatar of the Cool School and beyond. Also through Sept. 27: The **terence blanchard** quintet. Trumpeter Blanchard has successfully made the transition from promising young lion to respected veteran stylist. His best playing reflects his well-crafted film scores, and vice versa. Dining.

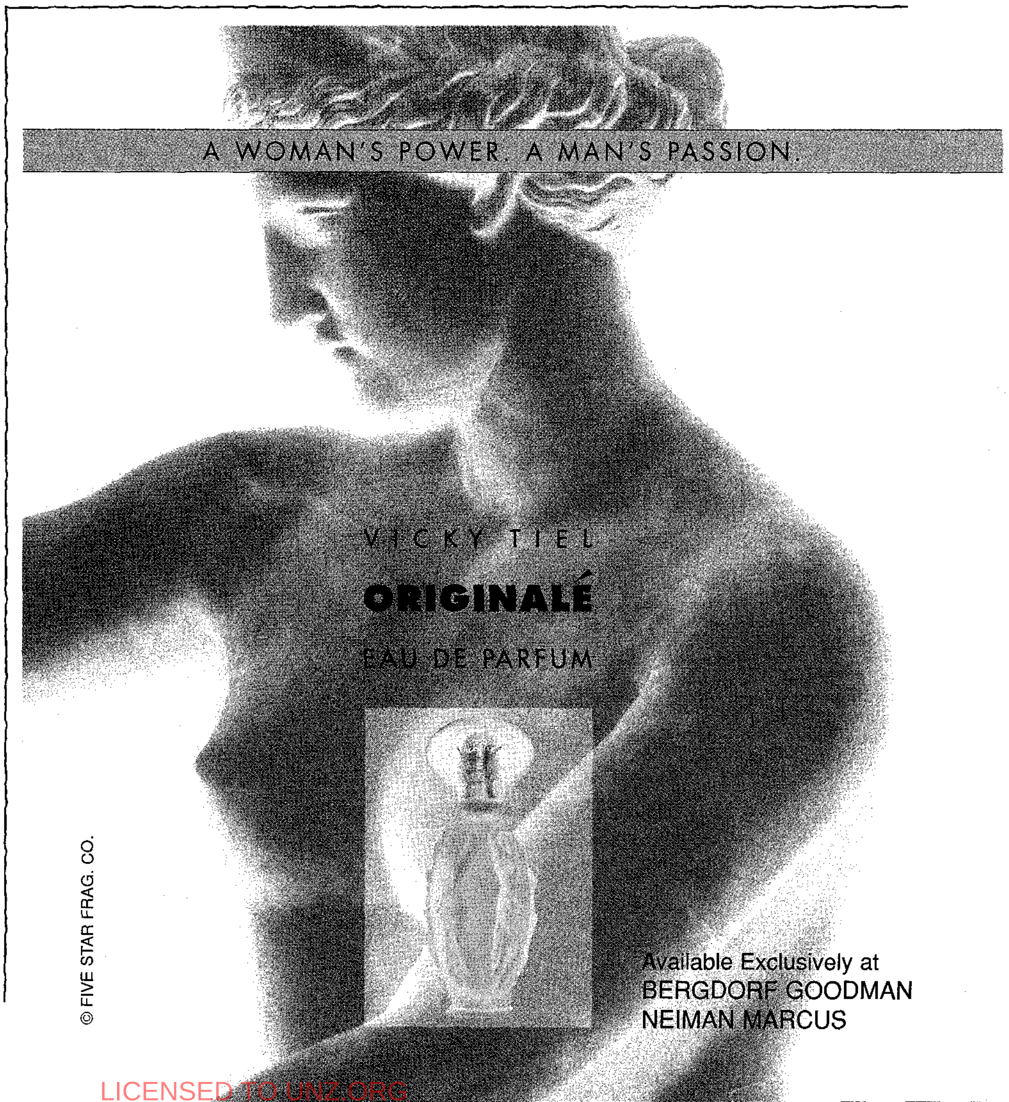
Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—Singer **barbara cook,** who still sets the standard in combining musicality with intensity, lets loose through Oct. 10. Monday nights belong to **woody allen and the eddy davis new orleans jazz band.** . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **peter mintun** presides at the piano through Oct. 10.

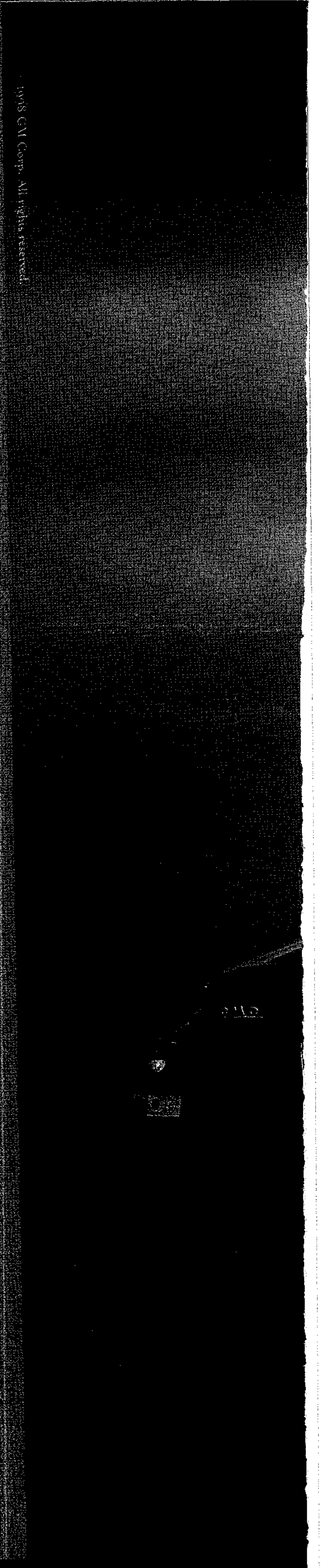
Don't Tell Mama, 343 W. 46th St. (757-0788)—The brouhaha surrounding the Gershwin centennial has obscured the centennial of another luminary of American popular song—Vincent Youmans, who was born on September 27, 1898, just one day after Gershwin. Both were New Yorkers, and both died young—Gershwin (of a brain cyst) at the age of thirty-six, Youmans (of tuberculosis and alcoholism) at forty-seven. Though he befriended Gershwin, Youmans often felt inferior to him as a composer. Perhaps he was, but in the end one can only regret that someone who could write such evergreens as "Tea for Two," "Rise 'n' Shine," and "Orchids in the Moonlight" should have been so hard on himself. **william youmans** (his great-nephew), who carries on the family tradition in show business, has linked up with **emily loesser** (also from a composing family) to create a biographical revue exploring this talented but tortured figure. They'll try it out before the public for one night only, on Youmans's hundredth birthday.

Iridium, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—After having spent a lifetime immersed in American vernacular song, from the blues and rock and roll to Broadway standards and gospel, **ruth brown** (here through Sept. 27) is a walking compendium of twentieth-century vocal traditions. She wraps it all up and delivers the whole soulful bundle with the pride of an artist and the grit of a show-business survivor. Mondays are given over to electric-guitar innovator **les paul.** Dining.

Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Through Sept. 26: The **steve wilson** quartet. Wilson's American début recording as a leader isn't going to turn the jazz community on its head, but it will give notice that this poised, conservative alto saxophonist and flute player is far more than just a trustworthy sideman. He's come through on the substantial promise he's shown with, among many others, Leon Parker and Chick Corea.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Sept. 23: **elliott sharp's tectonics.** Sept. 23: The **mario pavone** quintet, in the cozy Old Office space. Two exceptional players who were destined to find themselves on the same





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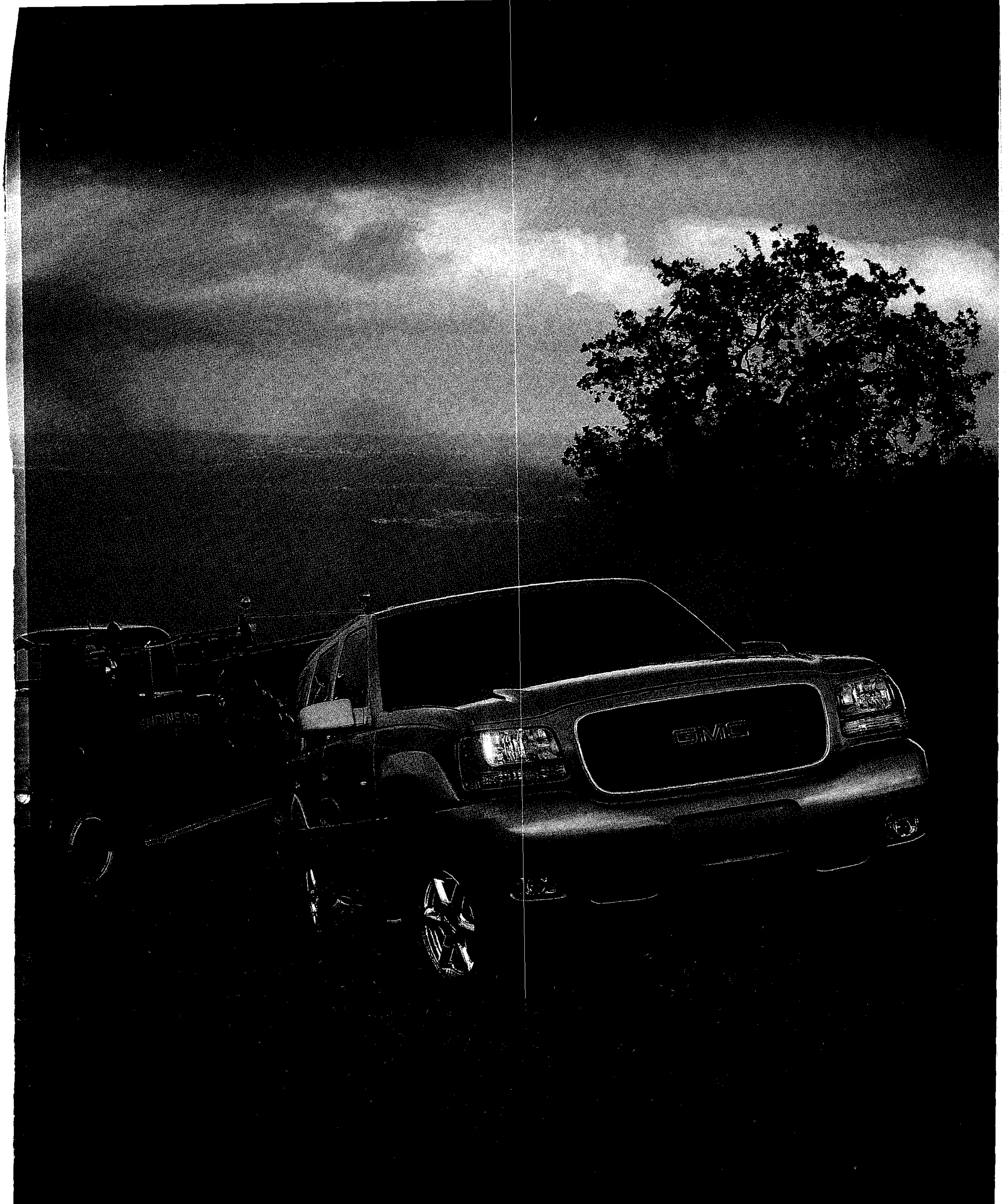

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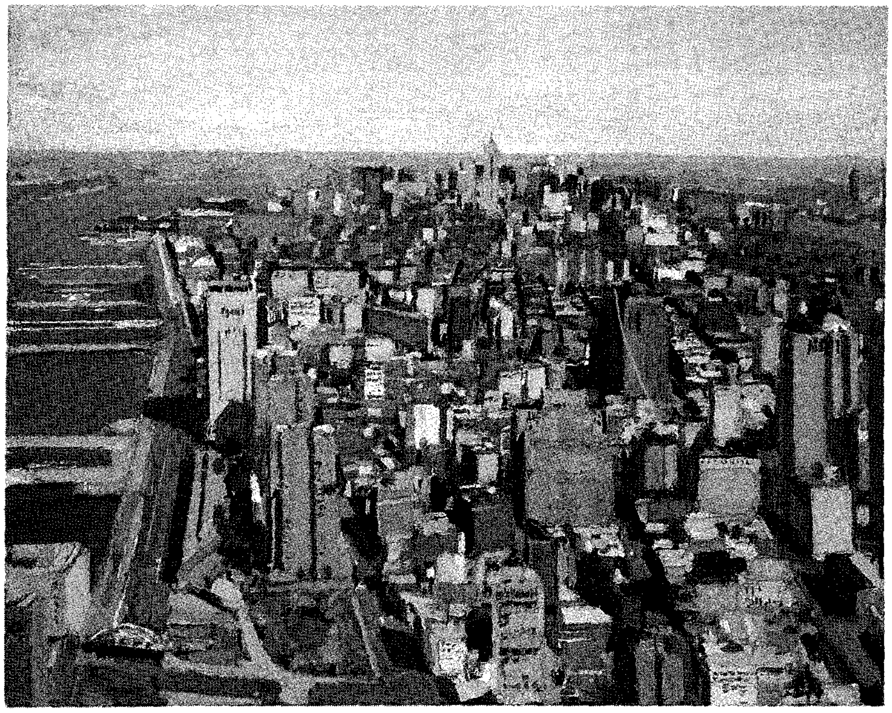
bandstand, bassist Pavone and drummer **MATT WILSON**, generate steamy rhythms; the strong ensemble includes trumpeter Jack Walrath, trombonist Art Baron, and pianist Peter Madsen. An atmospheric composer who knows how to coax a big sound out of a small band, Pavone has learned more from Charles Mingus than just an aggressive approach to the bass. Sept. 24-27: **ZONY MASH**, with keyboard eclectic **WAYNE HORVITZ** (also in the Old Office). Sept. 26: **MARC RIBOT Y LOS CUBANOS POSTIZOS.** Downtown's answer to Ry Cooder's "Buena Vista Social Club," Ribot's prosthetic Cubans appropriate the arrangements of Arsenio Rodriguez and other pre-Castro bandleaders.

Lenox Lounge, 288 Lenox Ave., between 124th and 125th Sts. (427-0253)—Sept. 25-26: The **NEW YORK POWERHOUSE ENSEMBLE**, featuring pianist John Hicks, bassist Mickey Bass, saxophonist Craig Handy, and drummer Eric Allen.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza (632-5000)—The great cabaret in the sky. Vocalist **CYBILL SHEPHERD** is in for a two-week stay. . . .



"World Trade Center, View of Manhattan," by John Dubrow, at Salander-O'Reilly.

¶ Across the hall, in the Rainbow Room, there's a revolving dance floor, plus swinging big-band music courtesy of the Rainbow Room Orchestra, featuring vocalists Sean Mahony and Hilary Kole. Closed Mondays.

S.O.B.'s, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—Sept. 23-24: Former Weather Report overlord **JOE ZAWINUL.**

Tonic, 107 Norfolk St. (358-7503)—Sept. 24-26: **JOHN ZORN'S MASADA.** Who would have ever imagined that the antic cut-and-paste aesthetician John Zorn would one day embrace his Jewish roots, mate klezmer with the improvisatory ploys of Ornette Coleman, and go on to organize the freshest and most openly emotive jazz ensemble of the day? Masada, with Zorn on alto and drummer Joey Baron, trumpeter Dave Douglas, and bassist Greg Cohen, is disciplined and unfettered, sombre and joyous—qualities the group has in common, come to think of it, with both klezmer and the music of Ornette Coleman.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through Sept. 27: The **DAVÍD SANCHEZ** quintet. Sanchez, a budding tenor titan whose burly, tactile tone and architectural phrasing call to mind Sonny Rollins, takes command for a week. Latin idioms are Sanchez's trump card; others play with the whitewater rapids of their rhythmic currents, Sanchez plays across them. For this passionate young talent, the clave carries as much weight as the cadence of hard bop. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

Zinno, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—Through Sept. 26: **MEREDITH D'AMBROSIO.** A rare engagement by this singer's singer who happens to paint most of her own CD covers. D'Ambrosio possesses a rich awareness of American song and an uncanny ability to move from "one of those bells that now and then ring" to a ballad like "How Is Your Wife?," which she has established as a bittersweet anthem for boomers and post-boomers. Completing her trio are **STEVE KUHN** on piano and **JAY LEONHART** on bass, and they pay strict attention.

ROCK, ETC.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Sept. 25: The country punk of **BLUE RODEO.**

Bowery Ballroom, 6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Sept. 24: **LOCAL H.** Proving the chestnut that less is in fact more, this humble outfit, comprised of just a guitarist and a drummer, makes a big noise with lots of low-end rumble and high-quality hooks.

Chicago B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—Sept. 25-26: **SON SEALS.** One of the leading figures of post-sixties blues, this son of an Arkansas juke-joint operator plays in the slashing, urgent style of his mentor, Albert King.

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Sept. 23: The deft blues guitarist and singer **KEB' MO'.** Sept. 24: **CANDLEBOX.** Signed in a hype-driven torrent to Madonna's Maverick Records, this entirely unremarkable combo has failed to deliver. Maybe it's because the band's music recalls the later work of Bon Jovi, albeit with better haircuts. Sept. 25-26: Having earned post-punk immortality as the force behind Hüsker Dü and pop kudos with the more nuanced, misanthropic Sugar, **BOB MOULD** has now entered the elder-statesman phase of his complicated career. He's in town with songs from his new album, "The Last Dog and Pony Show." . . . ¶ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday. The dancers share a passion for the Lindy Hop, a dance that involves a lot of whirling and the occasional display of underwear. Sets from eight until midnight. For information on the society, call 696-9737.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Sept. 25: **SKELETON KEY.** They were last year's beloved-local-boys-make-good-but-fail-to-sell-any-records story (see the wildly uneven but often inspired "Fantastic Spikes Through Balloons"); now they return to a smaller venue, where their controlled melodic chaos and percussive muscle ought to generate extreme pleasures.

Life, 158 Bleecker St. (420-1999)—Sept. 23: Eighties hair-metal survivors **L.A. GUNS.**

Shine, 285 West Broadway, at Canal St. (941-0900)—The leaders of the eight-piece Colombian rock band **BLOQUE** (Sept. 23), who used to play behind one of that country's top pop stars, Carlos Vives, know how to expand upon indigenous music and turn it up to a level that fills arenas. But they're not easily satisfied; their tunes incorporate hard grooves, a touch of jazz, and the heavy dissonance and discontented lyrics of old-fashioned rock and roll.

Tonic, 107 Norfolk St. (358-7503)—Sept. 27: His star is somewhat in decline these days, but the Kansas-born songwriter **FREEDY JOHNSTON** still remains one of our finest practitioners of the art. The clubs he plays have grown smaller, but that only means his talent now threatens to flood the room.

Tramps, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—Sept. 23: The **DONAL LUNNEY BAND.** Sept. 24: The jam-friendly, Hootie-flavored, eminently disposable pop of **BIG HEAD TODD AND THE MONSTERS.** Sept. 25: **JOHN LURIE AND THE LOUNGE LIZARDS.** You've got to hand it to Lurie. For almost twenty years now he's been daring listeners to decide: poseur or visionary? Either way, it's hard not to like the Lizards' wacky G-man shtick. Sept. 26: **ANGELIQUE KIDJO**, one of African pop's most fiery performers and outspoken feminists. Kidjo's caterwauling voice is a wonder, and her band grooves with a mixture of Western gloss and African spice.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—"From Van Eyck to Breugel: Early Netherlandish Painting in the Metropolitan Museum" showcases more than a hundred and forty works made during the golden age of the lowland republic, from 1420 to 1565. The paintings include such landmark works as Pieter Bruegel's "The Harvesters," as well as selections by the better-known painters represented, which provide a survey of their stylistic development. Through Jan. 3. . . . ¶ "The Ceaseless Century: Three Hundred Years of Eighteenth-Century Fashion" presents period outfits with their typical extravagance of effects (petticoats, stomachers, corseted waists, panniered skirts, flared peplums, etc.) alongside examples of their continuing influence, from nineteenth-century ball gowns and walking dresses to Dior cocktail dresses and Vivienne Westwood pirate ensembles. Through Nov. 29. . . . ¶ "The Nature of Islamic Ornament, Part II: Vegetal Patterns" identifies components of the arabesque—vine scrolls, blossoms, split leaves, and palmettes—in plant motifs from the ninth century to the eighteenth. Through Jan. 10. . . . ¶ "Ellsworth Kelly on the Roof." Through late fall. . . . ¶ "The Direct Eye," a small and unassuming show devoted to the interplay between self-taught and mainstream artists in this century, includes works by Horace Pippin, Max Weber, and Alison Saar. Through Oct. 18. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—"The New York School," a warmup exhibition for the Jackson Pollock retrospective, presents drawings by the Abstract Expressionists, including such colleagues and drinking buddies as Mark Rothko (see also the Whitney Museum), Helen Frankenthaler, Arshile Gorky, Philip Guston, and Willem de Kooning, who helped turn the former

Dutch colony into the center of the art world. Through Jan. 12.... ¶ A retrospective devoted to the work of Pierre Bonnard. Through Oct. 13.... ¶ "Alexander Rodchenko." Through Oct. 6.... ¶ "David Goldblatt: Photographs from South Africa." Through Oct. 6. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 6; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:30.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—Selections from the permanent collection are on display. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—The museum opens the first full-scale retrospective of Mark Rothko's work in two decades. Like many of his Abstract Expressionist peers, Rothko began his mature career making pictures indebted to European biomorphic Surrealism, before evolving his signature style of luminous, slightly spooky rectangles piled one above the other. The horizontal axis of Rothko's paintings suggests affinities with nineteenth-century Romantic landscapes; on the other hand, the broad expanses of color and severe geometric reduction look forward to the color-field and Minimalist art of the sixties. The temptation is to take a bath in his luxuriant palette—to treat Rothko as an AbEx Bonnard—but one should keep in mind that the artist allied his art with the timeless and the tragic. Through Nov. 29. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"Kerry James Marshall: Mementos" includes intricate and allusive paintings and sculptures (as well as a new site-specific installation) by an artist whose work is informed by events he witnessed in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963, and Watts, in 1965. Through Nov. 29.... ¶ "Martin Lewis's World: Cityscapes on Paper" compares New York cityscapes by the printmaker (1881-1962) with photographs on the same subject by some of his contemporaries. Through Oct. 25. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays, 11 to 9; and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St. (517-2742)—"Inside Out: New Chinese Art," an ambitious survey of art from mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, from the mid-eighties to the present, reveals that contemporary Chinese artists are in a double bind: even as they attempt to declare their independence from the strictures of their ancient cultural tradition, they risk being intellectually "colonized" by the West. Some artists have responded to this dilemma in brilliantly witty ways. Hong Hao's map, painted in the manner of a traditional Chinese manuscript, solves the problem by reinventing the world: here, the continental United States is China, with Shanghai where Washington used to be; Brazil is the Netherlands; Europe is Mozambique (except for the Iberian peninsula, now Vietnam); and most of northern China has been taken over by Andorra. The gallerygoer must do more mental work than usual while viewing this show: Li Shan's flatly painted Pop portrait of a young Mao with a lotus flower in his mouth might appear merely derivative here in Andy Warhol's town, but it was an act of bravery when it was painted in Beijing, in 1990, the year after the Tiananmen Square massacre. Several music, dance, and theatre performances are being presented under the auspices of this major exhibition. Mounted in conjunction with P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center (in Long Island City; 718-784-2084); the show continues at both venues through Jan. 3. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8; Sundays, noon to 5.)

TABLES FOR TWO

Periyali, 35 W. 20th St. (463-7890)—In some of the more common Greek-American restaurants, the waiters ignite the saganaki and shout, "*Opa!*" Charles Bowman, who has been the chef at this uncommonly upscale taverna since it opened, in 1987, creates excitement in subtler ways.

Come on a weeknight when you're feeling particularly exhausted, or hopeless, or sick of your job. Once you're seated beneath the billowing sailcloth ceiling, take a deep breath, cast an admiring glance around the small rooms (the atmosphere is as warm and breezy as a day on Mykonos, the crowd casually well-heeled and mostly over forty), and order a glass of astringent ouzo, a crazy liqueur designed to concentrate one's attention. Periyali has a serious array of appetizers to consider, and if you partake of a second glass of ouzo (you certainly should) you may get carried away. This is not a bad thing. It's possible to take a satisfying skip down the lane of Greek cuisine without ever making it to the entrées, which might be better left to a night when the world is not too much with you. The simpler Mediterranean flavors will be a tonic: charcoal-grilled octopus in red wine; smoked trout with dill, lemon, and olive oil; gigandes skordalia (giant white beans in a thick garlic sauce); a plate of rich and comforting taramosalata (caviar mousse), melintzanosalata (grilled-eggplant purée), and tzatziki (a mixture of cucumber, yogurt, and dill).

If you go for the all-appetizer meal, ask a waiter to bring you a nice wine—forgoing the entrée entitles you to splurge on a Clos de Jacobins St. Emilion or a Pavillon Rouge Margaux—and don't fret about passing up the lamb chops or the moussaka: you'll now have room for baklava, which should be missed only if a bomb goes off in the room. If you've got the one waiter in the place whose manner implies that his wife is waiting for him in the car, with the motor running and her hand poised over the horn, ignore him. Now is the time to linger contentedly with your espresso. If by this point you haven't forgotten your despair, you may have a chemical imbalance and should see your physician immediately. (Open weekdays for lunch and dinner, Saturdays for dinner only. Entrées $17-$26.)

Dia Center for the Arts, 548 W. 22nd St. (989-5566)—For "Excursus: Homage to the Square^3," the installation artist Robert Irwin has divided Dia's third floor into eighteen rooms with fine mesh-scrim walls, varying the effect in each of the translucent chambers with a spectrum of gels and fluorescent light.... ¶ "Joseph Beuys: Drawings After the Codices Madrid of Leonardo da Vinci, and Sculpture." Nearly a hundred drawings inspired by Leonardo's sketchbooks, as well as three sculptures, and performance regalia from "Aus Berlin." (Open Thursdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. (869-8089)—"Barney Tobey of *The New Yorker,*" forty-three original drawings by the cartoonist, complete with step-by-step examples of the collaborative process between artist and gag writer. Through Jan. 9. (Open Mondays, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Alan Bray—The hard-edged naturalism of this painter from Maine holds an enigmatic emotional turf: the nature he depicts (in springtime thaw or high summer) possesses a lyrical surface beauty, but the flat, chalky color and the almost mindless precision of his patterns make one wonder if there isn't a terrible nihilism lurking there as well. "Black Stream" reduces the surface of the water to distinctly outlined puddles, in a very limited palette of crimson, maroon, and mauve, like a paint-by-numbers landscape. Through Oct. 3. (Schmidt Bingham, 41 E. 57th St. 888-1122.)

John Dubrow / Sidney Goodman—Breathtaking aerial views of Lower Manhattan—and Brooklyn, Staten Island, the Harbor, and New Jersey—painted from the eighty-fifth floor of the World Trade Center. The city is conceived as a painterly patchwork of dingy smudges, but the over-all effect is magnificent. / Oil paintings of the human figure in contrived situations. A zaftig nude woman with a clown's head popping up in just the right spot, men who look like Eastern European soccer fans falling into a niche containing a sugary version of Bernini's St. Teresa. Goodman is a skillful painter, but his work is overwhelmed by gimmicks. Through Sept. 26. (Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. 879-6606. Open Mondays.)

Sharon Horvath / Mervyn Peake (1911-1968)—Maplike works of rare preciosity, at their best suggesting the elegant whimsies of Paul Klee. Painted in oil and incorporating elements of collage, Horvath's imaginary worlds are informed by dense layers of symbolism, delicately colored and strangely composed. One group of pieces in the exhibition, called the Rome Series (painted there last year, during the artist's Rome Prize residency), reflects the influence of medieval maps of the imperial city. / Peake was one of the century's great English eccentrics. Best known for his bizarre, brilliant "Gormenghast" trilogy of novels, he also possessed a witty touch with pencil and brush. This suite of fantastical creatures, entitled "Head Hunting in London," presents grotesque images of Englishmen turning into toads, crustaceans, and hideous birds of prey, emerging from miasmas of noxious blues and blacks. Both shows through Oct. 10. (De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 262-5050.)

"Julien Levy (1906-81): Portrait of an Art Gallery"—A selection of paintings, photographs, and ephemera relating to Levy's gallery, which pioneered the Surrealist sensibility in America. From 1931 to 1949, Levy showed works by Joseph Cornell, Max Ernst, Frida Kahlo, Man Ray, and a host of others. These were the years in which the young Abstract

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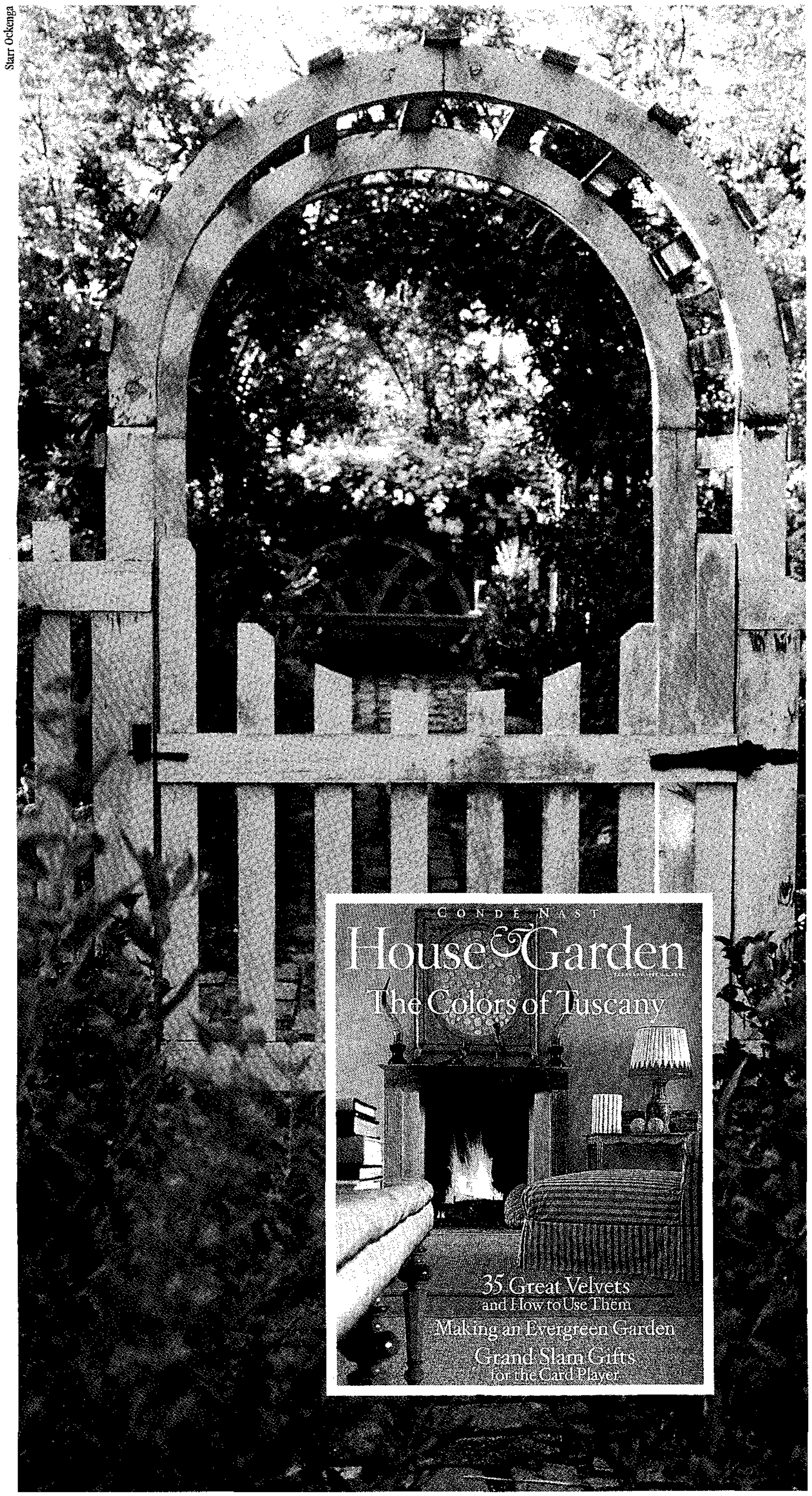

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Expressionists imbibed the effects and motifs of Surrealism before beginning their breakthrough achievements. Perhaps more than anyone else, Levy promoted the gallery not just as a space to show art but, with his innovative cocktail receptions, as a smart social hub. Levy was similarly prescient with regard to the Pop art of the future: in 1938, he organized a show of animation art from Disney's "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs." Through Oct. 31. (Equitable, Seventh Ave. at 52nd St. 554-4818. Open Mondays.)

Louise Nevelson (1899-1988)—Drawings and ceramic sculptures from the forties, the artist's formative decade. Some of the figure drawings have the economic monumentality of Matisse; others flirt awkwardly with Cubism, superimposing several takes of the same figure upon one another. Some of the black ceramic sculptures—almost abstract, incised with just enough lines to hint at the figure—are little masterpieces, endowed with a profound depth of suggestion and a luxurious serenity. If you only know Nevelson from her blustering walls, you don't know Nevelson at all. Through Oct. 17. (Washburn, 20 W. 57th St. 397-6780.)

Kenneth Noland—The cool abstract master comes full circle, returning to the concentric-ring motif that established his reputation in the late fifties and early sixties. Whereas Noland's early circle paintings dealt with the emotional resonances embodied by pure color, the new work is refined, even a bit fussy. "Pink Light" has a peppermint-candy-colored ground, with a great circular swath of orange, left unfinished, like a Zen koan. "Touch" is a mesmerizing mandala, white on white on white. The use of transparent acrylic gel endows many of the paintings with a welcoming intimacy and textural depth. An important new body of work from an important artist. Through Oct. 17. (Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St. 752-0124.)

Short List—**harris diamant,** Giampietro, 25 E. 73rd St. 861-8571. Through Oct. 10. . . . **claudia fitch,** Baumgold, 128 E. 72nd St. 861-7338. Through Oct. 17. . . . **david kroll,** Littlejohn, 41 E. 57th St. 980-2323. Through Oct. 3. . . . **john laub,** Fischbach, 24 W. 57th St. 759-2345. Through Oct. 10. . . . **jason martin,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. 980-5454. Through Oct. 10. . . . **alexander rodchenko,** Ubu, 16 E. 78th St. 794-4444. Through Oct. 17. . . . **betye saar** and **charmion von wiegand,** Rosenfeld, 24 W. 57th St. 247-0082. Both shows through Oct. 31.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Miguel Calderón—"Aggressively Mediocre / Mentally Challenged / Fantasy Island," paintings, sculptures, and video works by a Mexican artist plumbing the nether reaches of smirking vulgarity. The paintings suggest the scenario of a cheesy action movie taking place amid South American drug-cartel luxury: bodyguards and slatterns cavort in Jacuzzis while dodging bullets. The sculptures are in fact fountains, their waters tinted the blue of toilet disinfectant. The exhibition will appeal to those who enjoy wallowing in life's baser pleasures. Through Oct. 17. (Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 627-6000.)

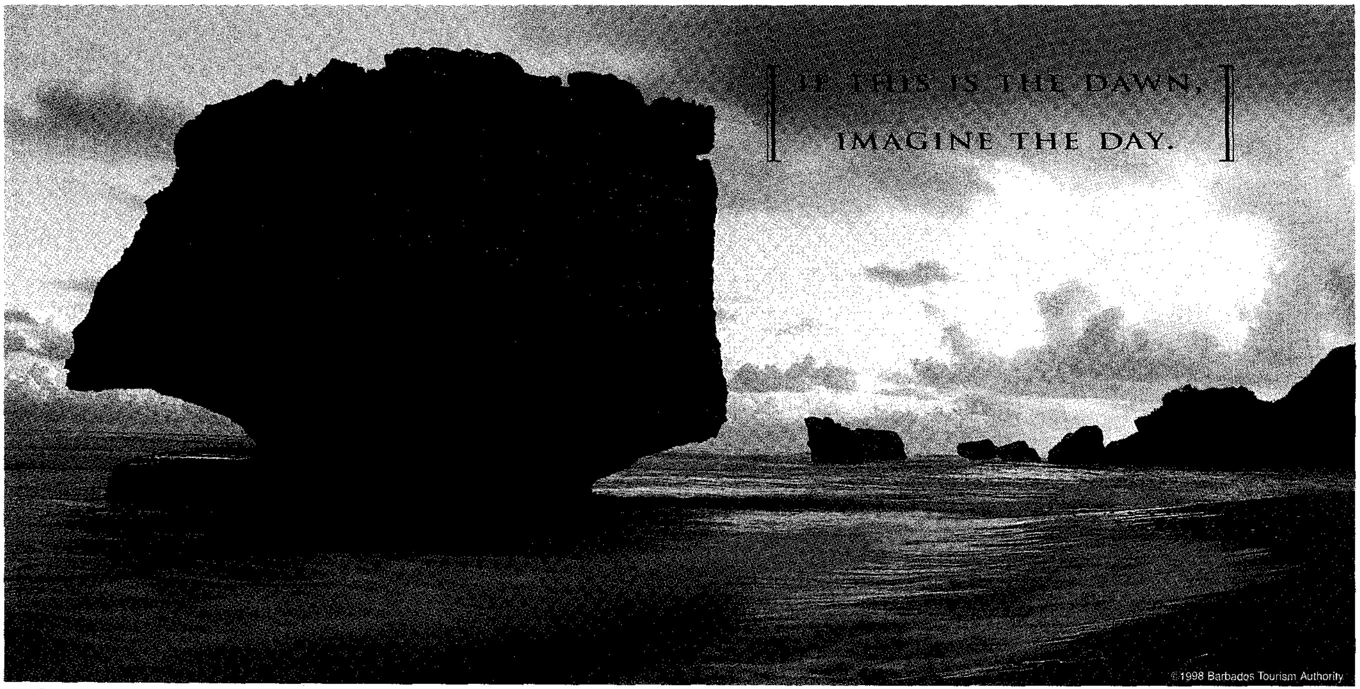
Sarah Lucas—"The Old In Out," sculptures and photographs by the foremost "bad girl" among the current crop of young British artists. The smashed, burnt cars covered in Marlboros seem somewhat overblown; more successful is the decrepit toilet with the words "Is suicide genetic?" rudely scrawled inside. This piece is surrounded by a suite of polyurethane toilets in various colors—a direct and cutting jibe at one of the most successful and palatable of Britain's new art stars, Rachel Whiteread. Through Oct. 17. (Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 206-9300.)

Jason Simon—A conceptual installation featuring a pair of large stadium loudspeakers, which play the dead ambient noise of an empty arena. As an exploration of the dynamics of public space, Simon's work is initially visually arresting, but otherwise it seems rather attenuated. Through Oct. 24. (Hearn, 530 W. 22nd St. 727-7366.)

Tunga—"True Rouge," this Brazilian artist's elaborate installation of hand-blown glass elements, which are strung up from floor to ceiling and which in some rather obscure way are derived from an "algebraic poem" by his collaborator and friend Simon Lane. The installation is enormous, purports to touch on quasi-philosophical issues, and looks awful and pretentious. Through Oct. 24. (Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St. 206-9100.)

"Home and Away"—A group show of young and clever art at this preëminently young and clever gallery, curated by Kirsty Bell, and including works by Stuart Cumberland, Peter Davies, Enoc Perez, Michael Raedecker, and Ruth Root. The most dramatic piece by far has to be Rob Pruitt's fountain, made of boxes of Evian water. The artist has also crafted exquisite bottled-water crates, bedizened with glitter. Through Oct. 10. (Gavin Brown's Enterprise, 436 W. 15th St. 627-5258.)

Short List—**lynda benglis,** Cheim & Read, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727. Through Oct. 10. . . . **mat collishaw,** Bonakdar Jancou, 521 W. 21st St. 414-4144. Through Oct. 17. . . . **elisabeth condon,** Coploff, 526 W. 26th St. 741-1149. Through Oct. 17. . . . **carl d'alvia,** Fredericks, 504 W. 22nd St. 633-6555. Through Oct. 10. . . . **erik a. frandsen,** DCA Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-5511. Through Oct. 17. . . . **barbara gallucci,** Eller, 529 W. 20th St. 206-6411. Through Oct. 10. . . . **jonathan hammer,** Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 243-0200. Through Oct. 24. . . . **rob hornsby,** Debs, 529 W. 20th St. 647-7080. Through Oct. 10. . . . **fang lijun,** Protetch, 511 W. 22nd St. 633-6999. Through Oct. 10. . . . **robert melee,** Kreps, 529 W. 20th St. 741-8849. Through Oct. 10. . . . **john morris,**



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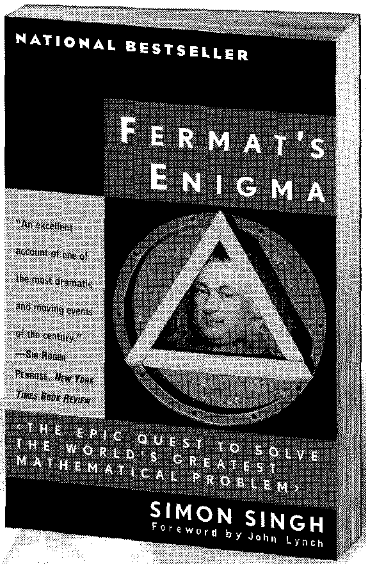
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D'Amelio Terras, 525 W. 22nd St. 352-9460. Through Oct. 3. . . . **Hironori Murai**, Liebman Magnan, 552 W. 24th St. 255-3225. Through Oct. 17. . . . **Brigitte Nahon**, Cristinerose, 529 W. 20th St. 206-0297. Through Oct. 10. . . . **Blake Rayne**, Greene Naftali, 526 W. 26th St. 463-7770. Through Oct. 10. . . . **Damien Smith**, Morris, 465 W. 23rd St. 727-2752. Through Oct. 17. . . . **Leslie Wayne**, Shainman, 513 W. 20th St. 645-1701. Through Oct. 10.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Beck & Al Hansen—Al Hansen, the father of Happenings, turns out to be the grandfather of Beck, the omnicompetent pop troubadour. Their art work appears in a two-man show called "Playing with Matches," and while some of the revelations are not surprising (Beck favors assemblage, and he's not as good at it as his grandpa) it is a pleasure to see the younger generation going to school on his forebear's hilarious kitchen-counter art (nudes made of cardboard, cigarettes, fava beans, Hershey wrappers, and, of course, matches). Through Oct. 24. (Thread Waxing Space, 476 Broadway. 966-9520.)

Alix Lambert—The artist taught herself tattooing and enlisted friends to provide skin space and subject matter. She then photographed the resulting testaments to friendship and faith in the learning curve, displayed here. Through Oct. 10. (Marcus, 578 Broadway. 226-3200.)

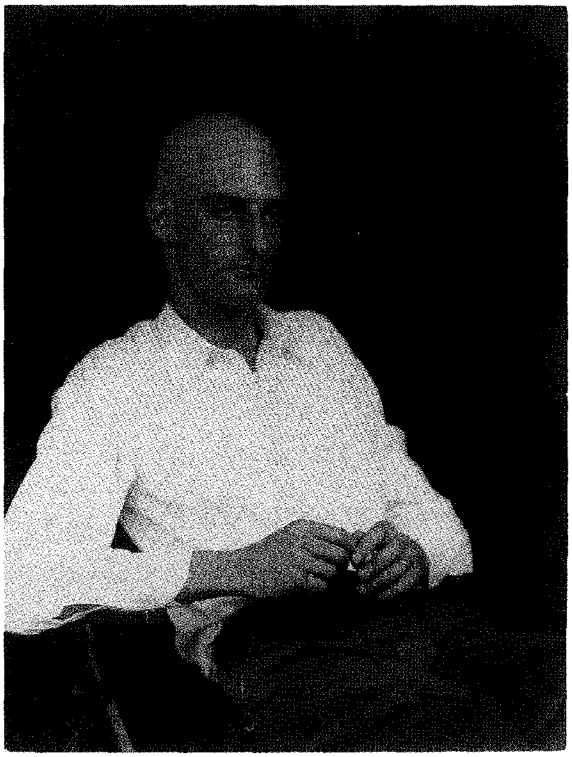
Maya Lin—Lin achieved enormous renown in the early eighties when she won the competition for the design of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., while still an undergraduate at Yale. On the evidence of this show, she should confine herself to architecture. Apparently, Lin worked with advanced technologies to generate some of these works, but the overwhelming impression is of extravagant means deployed for derivative effect. "Phases of the Moon," for example, consists of eight beeswax disks that recall the work of the German minimalist-inclined sculptor Wolfgang Laib, while "Avalanche" is an immense mound of glass shards which recalls the sixties earthworks of Robert Smithson somewhat less than it does the candy piles of Felix Gonzalez-Torres. Through Oct. 31. (Grey Art Gallery, 100 Washington Square E. 998-6780.)

Short List—**Terry Adkins** and **Dotty Attie**, P.P.O.W, 476 Broome St. 941-8642. Both shows through Oct. 10. . . . **Jayashree Chakravarty**, the Drawing Room, 40 Wooster St. 219-2166. Through Oct. 22. . . . **Joe Fyfe**, Davies, 23 Commerce St. 243-6840. Through Oct. 10. . . . **Cadence Giersbach**, Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 343-7300. Through Oct. 17. . . . **Georg Herold**, Brooke Alexander, 59 Wooster St. 925-4338. Through Oct. 31. . . . **Wade Hoefer**, Knowlton, 568 Broadway. 966-2625. Through Oct. 17. . . . **Alexander Kaletski**, Dillon, 431 West Broadway. 966-2977. Through Oct. 5. . . . **Hoon Kwak**, Cowles, 420 West Broadway. 925-3500. Through Oct. 3. . . . **Santi Moix**, Kasmin, 74 Grand St. 219-3219. Through Oct. 10. . . . **Allan Wexler**, Feldman, 31 Mercer St. 226-3232. Through Oct. 10. . . . **Lisa Yuskavage**, Boesky, 51 Greene St. 941-9888. Through Oct. 10.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Sotheby's—Sept. 26: A wine auction, conducted in tandem with Sherry-Lehmann, includes at least one lot the likes of which will not be seen again: ten melchiors, each containing the equivalent of twenty-four standard seven-hundred-and-fifty-millilitre bottles, of Caymus Vineyards' Special Selection Cabernet Sauvignon, one from each vintage produced since 1985, each autographed by Caymus's legendary father-and-son winemakers Charlie and Chuck Wagner. The lot carries no estimate, so it will certainly sell. Heads will also turn when a complete ninety-bottle vertical collection of Opus One crosses the block. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

Morrell's—Large formats seem to be very big in this season's wine auctions. The melchiors Sotheby's is offering this week look downright puny next to the ninety-eight-litre bottle of Fonseca Bin 27 port (blended from the 1982 and 1983 vintages) being presented in this sale as the "world's largest bottle of wine." It measures sixty inches in circumference at the base, stands thirty-seven inches high, is stopped with a five-and-a-half-inch cork, and contains ninety-eight litres of port—the equivalent of eleven *cases*. (Grand Havana Room, 666 Fifth Ave. Sept. 26. For information, call 307-4200.)



Berenice Abbott's "Portrait of Julien Levy," in a show devoted to the gallery owner, at the Equitable (Uptown).

Christie's—Sept. 23: The Homer Perkins collection of a hundred and eighty antique glass paperweights, including examples dating back to mid-nineteenth-century France. . . . ¶ Sept. 24: French and Continental furniture, rugs, and decorative art. (Park Ave. at 59th St. 546-1000.)

Phillips—The estate of Dora Maar, Picasso's lover and the model for his "weeping women" portraits, will be auctioned Oct. 27-29, in Paris. Selections from the sale (which includes ten paintings, fifty drawings, and many pieces of jewelry by Picasso) can be previewed this week at Phillips. (406 E. 79th St. 570-4830. Sept. 26-28.)

Doyle—Furniture, decorations, and paintings. (175 E. 87th St. 427-2730. Sept. 23.)

Swann—An auction of early printed books. (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710. Sept. 24.)

Decorative Arts and Textiles Show. (69th Regiment Armory, Lexington Ave., at 25th St. Sept. 25-27. For information, call 255-0020.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

International Center of Photography Midtown—"Seeing Is Believing," a survey of the work of Vik Muniz. Through Nov. 8. (Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 8; and Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6.)

Short List—**ansel adams,** Alan Klotz/Photocollect, 22 E. 72nd St. 327-2211. Closed Tuesdays. Through Oct. 24. . . . **shelby lee adams,** Richardson, 560 Broadway. 343-1255. Through Oct. 10. . . . **sally apfelbaum** and **nicholas barker,** Saul, 560 Broadway. 431-0747. Both shows through Oct. 17. . . . **eugène atget,** Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 752-1223. Through Oct. 10. . . . **jeff brouws,** Mann, 42 E. 76th St. 570-1223. Through Oct. 17. . . . **chris buck,** SABA, 116 E. 16th St. 477-7722. Open Mondays, closed Saturdays. Through Oct. 5. . . . **linda butler,** Witkin, 415 West Broadway. 925-5510. Through Oct. 10. . . . **harry callahan** and **robert rauschenberg,** Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999. Both shows through Oct. 24. . . . **ellen carey** and **amanda means,** Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 627-4819. Both shows through Oct. 10. . . . **larry clark,** Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St. 206-9100. Through Oct. 24. . . . **miles coolidge,** Kaplan, 48 Greene St. 226-6131. Through Oct. 10. . . . **regina de luise,** Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 517-3766. Through Oct. 10. . . . **thomas demand,** 303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-1121. Through Oct. 14. . . . **sunil janah,** Gallery at 678, at 678 Broadway. 260-0867. Through Sept. 25. . . . **jan lukas,** De Lellis, 47 E. 68th St. 327-1482. Through Nov. 7. . . . **klaus lutz,** De Chiara/Stewart, 521 W. 26th St. 967-6007. Through Oct. 10. . . . **susan meiselas,** Leica, 670 Broadway. 777-3051. Opens Saturdays at noon. Through Oct. 24. . . . **ray k. metzker** and **albert renger-patzsch,** Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. 226-1220. Both shows through Oct. 31. . . . **carlo mollino,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. 980-5454. Through Oct. 10. . . . **eadweard muybridge,** Wessel and O'Connor, 242 W. 26th St. 242-8811. Open Sundays. Through Nov. 1. . . . **gordon parks,** Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010. Through Oct. 31. . . . **tomio seike,** Gallery 292, at 120 Wooster St. 431-0292. Through Oct. 31. . . . **spencer tunick,** I-20, at 529 W. 20th St. 645-1100. Through Oct. 24. . . . **james welling,** Tonkonow, 601 W. 26th St. 255-8450. Through Oct. 31. . . . **brett weston,** Houk, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 750-7070. Through Nov. 7.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—Opening performances of the season, which continues through April 24. **samson et dalila,** with Olga Borodina, Plácido Domingo (celebrating his thirtieth year of performing with the company), and Sergei Leiferkus; conducted by James Levine. (Sept. 28 at 7.) . . . ¶ **aida,** with Maria Guleghina, Nina Terentieva, Vladimir Bogachov, Gregg Baker, and Robert Lloyd; with Mr. Domingo conducting. (Sept. 29 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

New York City Opera—Sept. 23 at 7:30 and Sept. 26 at 1:30: "Tosca." . . . ¶ Sept. 24 at 7:30 and Sept. 27 at 1:30: "Il Barbiere di Siviglia." . . . ¶ Sept. 25 at 8: A double bill of Weill's "The Seven Deadly Sins" and Orff's "Carmina Burana." . . . ¶ Sept. 26 at 8: Handel's "Partenope." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

Music Under Construction—Presenting the première of "The Quiet American," based on the novel by Graham Greene, with music and libretto by Wendy Griffiths. (Theatre of the Riverside Church, W. 120th St. and Riverside Dr. Sept. 25 at 8. For information about tickets, call 718-832-2871.)

Amato Opera—Presenting "La Bohème." (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. Sept. 26 at 7:30 and Sept. 27 at 2:30.)

ORCHESTRAS

New York Philharmonic—At Avery Fisher Hall, with Kurt Masur conducting, the orchestra continues its survey of Beethoven's nine symphonies. Sept. 24 at 8 and Sept. 25 at 2: The Symphonies No. 4 and No. 5. . . . ¶ Sept. 26 and Sept. 28 at 8: The Symphonies No. 6 (the "Pastoral") and No. 7. (875-5030. The Beethoven cycle continues through Oct. 3. . . . **note:** Pre-concert recitals, open to ticket holders, are given over to Beethoven's A-Major Cello Sonata, on Sept. 24 at 7, and his G-Major String Trio, on Sept. 26 at 7.)

San Francisco Symphony—In the opening concerts of Carnegie Hall's season, Michael Tilson Thomas conducting. Sept. 23 at 7: An all-Gershwin program that comprises the Overture to "Of Thee I Sing," the Second Rhapsody (with Mr. Tilson Thomas doubling as piano soloist), scenes from "Porgy and Bess," selected songs, and "An American in Paris." Singers Audra McDonald, Brian Stokes Mitchell, and Frederica von Stade take solo turns. . . . ¶ Sept. 24 at 8: Cowell's "Music 1957," Berg's Three Pieces for Orchestra (Op. 6), and Mahler's Symphony No. 1. (247-7800.)

American Composers Orchestra—The ensemble performs George Crumb's "Echoes of Time and the River," in addition to three New York premières: Randall Woolf's "White Heat," George Perle's Piano Concerto No. 1 (featuring Michael Boriskin), and Melinda Wagner's Flute Concerto. Paul Lustig Dunkel conducts all but the Wagner, in which he picks up his flute to serve as soloist while Mark Mandarano takes over the podium. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Sept. 27 at 3.)

Deep in Shostakovich—Some music lovers may find total immersion in the grimmer side of Shostakovich a rather heady exercise for a Monday morning. Nonetheless, the Manhattan School of Music, in conjunction with Columbia University's Harriman Institute and conductor Yuri Temirkanov, has put together a daylong mini-festival that should appeal to anyone interested in this seminal twentieth-century figure. Sept. 28 at 10 A.M.: Mr. Temirkanov conducts the Manhattan School of Music Symphony Orchestra, expanded by four principal players from the St. Petersburg Philharmonic, in a rehearsal reading of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 10, which the composer is said to have conceived as a portrait of his nemesis, Stalin. The work got a mixed reception when it was unveiled, in 1953: detractors complained that it was "deeply pessimistic," while the more supportive faction protested, without really disagreeing, that it was "an optimistic tragedy." . . . ¶ At 2: A roundtable about Shostakovich and the cultural politics of Stalinist Russia. . . . ¶ At 4: Mr. Temirkanov and musicians from the St. Petersburg Philharmonic share personal reminiscences about Shostakovich. (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. No tickets necessary.)

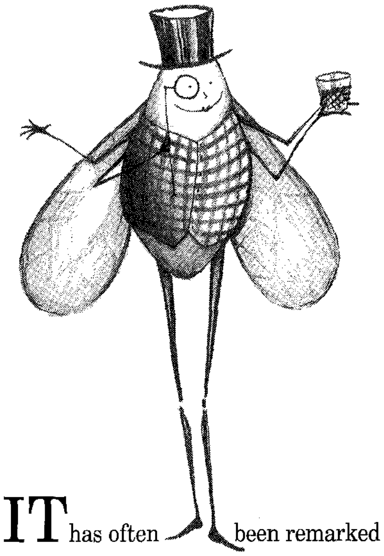
Jupiter Symphony—Jens Nygaard leads Meyerbeer's "Schiller Centennial" March, Vieuxtemps's Violin Concerto No. 5 (with Stephanie Chase), Gade's "Summer Day in the Country," and Liszt's Piano Concerto No. 1 (with Jerome Rose). (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. Sept. 28 at 2 and 7, and Sept. 29 at 8. For information about tickets, call 799-1259.)

RECITALS

Jeffrey Siegel—The pianist performs and speaks about Schubert's piano works. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. Sept. 23 at 8.)

William Chen and **Adam Neiman**—The pianists, winners of Juilliard's 1998 Gina Bachauer Competition, share a recital, with Mr. Chen performing works by Busoni (his Sonata No. 6, after Bizet's "Carmen"), Saint Saëns/Godowsky, and Stravinsky/Agosti, and Mr. Neiman offering pieces by Brahms and Chopin. (Paul Hall, Juilliard School, 60 Lincoln Center Plaza. Sept. 23 at 9. No tickets necessary.)

HAMISH
NOT
SQUEAMISH



IT has often been remarked that devotees of The Macallan Malt Whisky nurture an almost mystical belief in the 'water of life' qualities of their favourite dram. But seldom has it found such expression as in the following true anecdote kindly related to us by Mr C. Wemyss of Ravenhead, Notts.

'My friend Hamish, at a pre-Christmas party in my garden, found a fly had landed in his glass, and drowned. "Don't worry, Hamish," said I. "Have another Macallan in a clean glass." "I shall do nothing of the sort," he replied, removing the tiny creature from his glass and sipping the sherry-gold elixir.

"The Macallan never hurt a fly, and nor does a fly hurt The Macallan!" Ten minutes later indeed the insect stirred and flew off.

"There you are," said Hamish triumphantly. "And now you can give me a *gnat's more*." '

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Bargemusic—Violinist Mark Peskanov and cellist Ronald Thomas play the Handel/Halvorsen Passacaglia and Sarabande, pianist Edward Auer plays several waltzes by Chopin, and all three join for Schubert's Piano Trio in E-Flat Major. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061. Sept. 24 at 7:30 and Sept. 27 at 4.)

"Suspended Music"—A site-specific performance involving the "Long String Instrument," a one-of-a-kind contraption whose hundred-foot-long strings (stretched across the performing space) create a sort of obstacle course for the players, who walk among them, bowing them with rosin-covered fingers. On the docket are compositions by Pauline Oliveros and Ellen Fullman. (Low Memorial Library Rotunda, Columbia University; enter at Broadway at 116th St. Sept. 24-26 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

Eaken Piano Trio—Precisely on the hundredth anniversary of Gershwin's birth, the ensemble performs arrangements of his songs, with actress Dana Ivey reading from his writings and from the reminiscences of people who knew him. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Sept. 26 at 2.)

Sharon Isbin—The guitarist is joined by percussionist Thiago de Mello and the Brazilian band Amazon in folk-inspired works by (among others) Leo Brouwer, Agustín Barrios, and Mr. de Mello. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. Sept. 26 at 8.)

Music by Osvaldo Golijov—Born in Argentina, in 1960, Golijov grew up in Buenos Aires and in Israel before moving to the United States in 1986. His works typically reveal a fascination with Jewish and Latin-American music, but his superlative training as a composer (which included an extended stint in the studio of George Crumb, at the University of Pennsylvania) enables him to synthesize these influences to achieve a recognizable personal style. This concert comprises his much played "Yiddishbbuk," "K'vakarat," "Dreams and Prayers of Isaac the Blind," and "Din," performed by the St. Lawrence String Quartet, clarinettist Todd Palmer, and cantor Morton Shames. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. Sept. 26 at 8:30.)

Chang Tao—The pianist, who won the 1997 Vianna da Motta International Piano Competition, performs Medtner's Sonata No. 3, Schubert's "Drei Klavierstücke" (D. 946), and Ravel's "Miroirs." (Weill Recital Hall. 247-7800. Sept. 26 at 8:30.)

"Sundays on the Island"—Violinist Eric Grossman, cellist Iris Regev, and pianist Richard Kogan perform Schubert's Piano Trio in E-Flat Major and several "Jazzicals" by Ilan Rechtman. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 718-885-2478. Sept. 27 at noon.)

Beth Anderson—Flutist, performing sonatas by Martinů and Bach (in B Minor), as well as works by Wallingford Riegger, Gregory Tucker, Allen Shawn, and Maurice Duruflé (his "Prélude, Récitatif et Variations," Op. 3). Pianist Dorothy Kalson, flutist Sue Ann Kahn, and violist Tina Pelikan assist. (Weill Recital Hall. 247-7800. Sept. 27 at 2.)

Piano Quartets—Though far from vast, the catalogue of works for piano quartet includes some choice entries. This afternoon, aficionados will be torn between two of the finest, by Fauré and Brahms. Sept. 27 at 3: The Lyric Piano Quartet—comprising New York Philharmonic concertmaster Glenn Dicterow, violist Karen Dreyfus (his wife), cellist Frederick Zlotkin, and pianist Gerald Robbins—offers Brahms's Piano Quartet in C Minor, as well as lesser-known piano quartets by Turina and Ladislas Zeleński. (Kosciuszko Foundation, 15 E. 65th St. 734-2130.) . . . ¶ Also on Sept. 27 at 3: In the season's opening New York Philharmonic Ensembles concert, members of the orchestra perform Fauré's G-Minor Piano Quartet, plus a Telemann trio sonata and Beethoven's G-Major String Trio. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330.)

Antara Ensemble—The fourteen-member ensemble, conducted by Harold Jones (who doubles as solo flutist), offers flute-oriented works by Bach, Ginastera, and Bernard Rogers, as well as Mozart's "Serenata Notturna," William Foster McDaniel's "String Overture," and Britten's "Simple Symphony." (United Moravian Church, 200 E. 127th St. Sept. 27 at 3. For information about tickets, call 866-2545.)

Makiko Hirata—Pianist, performing Bach's Partita No. 1, Beethoven's Thirty-two Variations on an Original Theme, and Stravinsky's Études. (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. Sept. 27 at 6 and 8. No tickets necessary.)

ALSO OF INTEREST

rialto ensemble: Baroque music by Handel, Rameau, and others. (Trinity Church, Broadway at Wall St. Sept. 24 at 1. Admission by contribution.) . . . **yukio yokoyama:** Piano works by Beethoven, Liszt, Ravel, and Chopin. (Weill Recital Hall. 247-7800. Sept. 24 at 8.) . . . **manhattan school of music symphony orchestra:** Works by Fred Cohen, Barber, and Sibelius (his Symphony No. 5), conducted by George Manahan. (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. Sept. 25 at 8. No tickets necessary.) . . . **little orchestra society:** A group of "Lolli-pops Concerts" for the three-to-five-year-old set. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. Sept. 26 at 10:30 A.M. and noon and Sept. 27 at 12:30 and 2. For information about tickets, call 971-9500.) . . . **john robilette:** Pianist, performing Bach, Brahms, and Weber. (St. Paul's Chapel, Broadway at Fulton St. Sept. 28 at noon. Admission by contribution.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"Stories at the Moth"—The novelist George Dawes Green ("The Juror") lives part of the year in Georgia, and the time he has spent there listening to folks tell stories long into the Southern night inspired him to invite friends and writers to his Manhattan apartment, in June of last year, for an evening of storytelling. It was such a success that Green started repeating these affairs, with different speakers, at bars and restaurants around town. "The nights re-create the atmosphere of a casual dinner party, but the addition of a microphone challenges the storyteller, creating dynamic tension and interesting surprises," says Joey Xanders, artistic director of the series. On Sept. 28 at 8, writers Mike Albo and Jonathan Ames and actress Hazelle Goodman offer tales on the subject of "What You Want and What You Get." (Lansky Lounge, 104 Norfolk St., near Delancey St. For reservations, which are required, call 741-8926.)

Readings—Sept. 23 at 8: By novelist Tommy Kelly, from his take on Yankee Stadium and its fans, "Mad Cathedral." (Rocky Sullivan's, 129 Lexington Ave. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Sept. 28 at 7:30: By poets Bernadette Mayer and Ron Padgett. (K.G.B., 85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Sept. 28 at 8: By poet Seamus Heaney. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.)

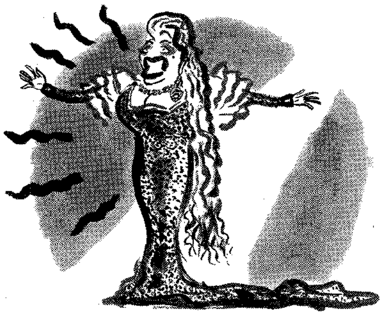
Talks—Sept. 23 at 6: Novelist Andrea Barrett ("Ship Fever," "Voyage of the Narwhal") considers the links between explorers and writers. (Celeste Bartos Forum, New York Public Library, Fifth Ave at 42nd St. 930-0571.) . . . ¶ Sept. 23 at 8: Poets Galway Kinnell and Mark Doty discuss the work of Hart Crane and Walt Whitman. (Main Building, New York University, 32 Waverly Pl. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Sept. 24 at 7:30: Erica Jong and Naomi Wolf talk about what women want. Katie Roiphe provides the introduction. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824.)

Walk—Sept. 26 at 9: On the hundredth anniversary of George Gershwin's birth, Howard Goldberg, of Adventure on a Shoestring, leads a guided tour past the theatres and concert halls of midtown Manhattan where many of the composer's tunes had their premières. For more information, call 265-2663.

BOOK CURRENTS

The Fat Lady Sings

Opera is enjoying a boom these days, helped in part by the use of instant-translation systems like the Metropolitan Opera's Star Tekkie Titles. In addition to the new technology, there are many new books designed to make this most intimidating of the performing arts downright user-friendly.



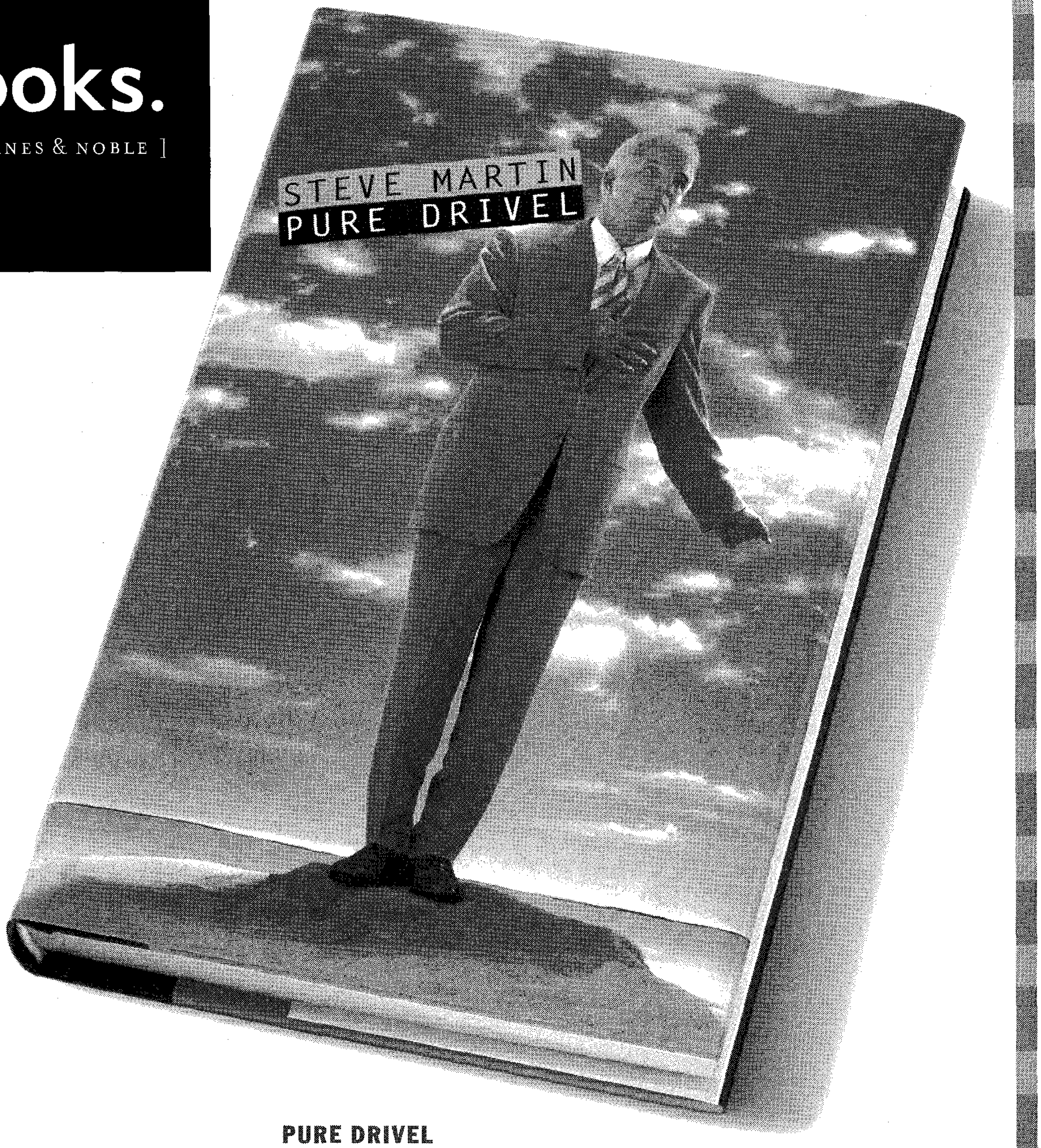
Hard-core operagoers generally regard the **New Grove Dictionary of Opera** (now out in four moderately affordable paperback volumes) as the Bible. By comparison, Denis Forman's **A Night at the Opera: An Irreverent Guide to the Plots, the Singers, the Composers, the Recordings** (Random House) is a kind of Gnostic Gospel, presenting its wealth of information informally, favoring the funny anecdote and giving breezy but discerning tips about what to listen for. And Michael Raeburn's **The Chronicle of Opera** (Thames and Hudson) is an approachable illustrated history that runs from Jacopo Peri to the fire that destroyed La Fenice.

Who's afraid of Richard Wagner? William Berger's forthcoming **Wagner Without Fear** (Vintage) is an engaging guide to the composer's controversial theories, tempestuous life, and groundbreaking music, aimed at those who are put off by his fearsome reputation. Another innovator, Constantin Stanislavsky, insisted on emotional realism rather than grandiose gesture in opera. His teachings on the art have recently been published as **Stanislavski on Opera** (Routledge).

Opera buffs are forever moaning that voices aren't what they used to be, but it's just not so, argues Helena Matheopoulos in **Diva: The New Generation** (Northeastern), a collection of interviews with twenty-one singers who are fairly new to stardom. Manuela Hoelterhoff's **Cinderella & Company: Backstage at the Opera with Cecilia Bartoli** (Knopf) is a fly-on-the-wall report on how the young Rossini specialist is attempting to reshape the diva role, and it is also an unvarnished view of the clashing egos of today's opera world. Renzo and Roberto Allegri's **Callas by Callas** (Universe) pulls together letters and diary entries for an intimate look at the ultimate diva.

GERARD NICOLAS

Books.
[AT BARNES & NOBLE]



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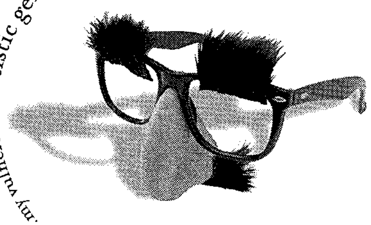

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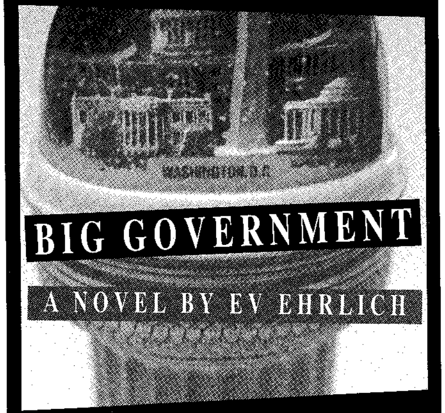

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THE MOVIES

OPENING

The Brandon Teena Story—Reviewed below in Film Notes. Opening Sept. 23.

Clay Pigeons—A Montana gas-station attendant (Joaquin Phoenix) finds himself accused of several murders in this black-comic thriller directed by David Dobkin. Also with Vince Vaughn. Opening Sept. 25. (Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Village Theatre VII.)

Dirty Laundry—A marital comedy, directed by Robert Sherwin and Michael Normand, with Jay Thomas and Tess Harper. Opening Sept. 25. (64th and 2nd and Village East Cinemas.)

The Last Big Thing—Dan Zukovic wrote, directed, and plays the lead in this film about the Los Angeles Zeitgeist. Opening Sept. 25. (Angelika Film Center.)

Lolita—Reviewed below in Film Notes. Opening Sept. 25.

Monument Ave.—Irish hoodlums in Boston's Charlestown neighborhood. Directed by Ted Demme; with Billy Crudup, Noah Emmerich, Denis Leary, and Colm Meaney. Opening Sept. 25. (Angelika Film Center.)

Naked Acts—The story of an actress (Jake-ann Jones) in a low-budget art film, written and directed by Bridgett M. Davis. Opening Sept. 25. (Thalia.)

Pecker—A comedy about an eighteen-year-old from Baltimore (Edward Furlong) who takes photographs and becomes the toast of the New York art world. Written and directed by John Waters. Opening Sept. 25. (Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Regency.)

Ronin—John Frankenheimer's action thriller about a group of retired international spies (including Robert De Niro, Jean Reno, Sean Bean, and Natascha McElhone) and a mysterious briefcase. Opening Sept. 25. (Chelsea Cinemas, Coronet Cinemas, 84th Street Six-plex, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII.)

Shadrach—Susanna Styron directed this film, based on a short story by her father, William, about growing up in Virginia in 1935. With Harvey Keitel, Andie MacDowell, Scott Terra, and John Franklin Sawyer. Opening Sept. 23.

Skin and Bone—Writer-director Everett Lewis's drama about three male hustlers in Hollywood. Opening Sept. 25. (Quad Cinema.)

Urban Legend—A horror film about murders on a New England college campus, with Jared Leto and Alicia Witt; directed by Jamie Blanks. Opening Sept. 25.

FILM NOTES

(If a movie has been reviewed recently in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given.)

The Brandon Teena Story—Susan Muska and Gréta Ólafsdottir remind us that the documentary doesn't have to be a neutral form—it can be passionate, angry, and persuasive. Working with a shoestring budget (from the looks of it), they tell the story of Brandon Teena, a twenty-year-old girl who chose to live as a young man and who wound up murdered, execution-style, in a cabin in rural Nebraska. The theme here is homophobia, but the filmmakers also coax us into seeing Brandon's story in the more universal context of human rights. They talk to young straight women who fell for him because he was the first man not to shove them around. They explore high violence rates in towns where no one can find a job, and look into callous prisons that send inmates back into the world ready for revenge. A witty soundtrack of country tunes keeps the film light on its feet; if it didn't, the story might be too sad to bear.—*Sarah Kerr* (Film Forum; starting Sept. 23.)

Buster Keaton Shorts—Our native genius of comic dexterity and deadpan pulled off some of his purest flights (and pratfalls) of fancy in a succession of knockabout two-reelers. These three share the theme of a booby-trapped House Beautiful. In "One Week" (1920), Buster and his bride build a prefab home out of mislabelled parts; in "High Sign" (1921), he becomes a bodyguard for a miser who turns a family manse into a maze of secret getaway passages; and in "The Electric House" (1922), he rigs a deluxe estate with gimmicks ranging from a push-button book-finder to a bathtub that moves on electric tracks. All these shorts take place in a universe run by Rube Goldberg, Mack Sennett, and Albert Einstein. They're full of contraptions that work once and then careen out of control because of the mysterious tendency of straight lines to curve, and curves to go straight.—*Michael Sragow* (Film Forum 2; Sept. 27-28.)

The Last Laugh (1924)—A breathtaking achievement in silent-film technique, from the German studio UFA. Emil Jannings is the man whose self-esteem and position in society depend on his uniform, in F. W. Murnau's masterpiece of design and cinematography.—*Pauline Kael* (Museum of Modern Art; Sept. 24 and Sept. 26.)

Lolita—After a drearily predictable fuss, and a showing on cable TV, Adrian Lyne's version of the Nabokov novel finally staggers into movie theatres. The irony is that the picture itself is tender and even rather tame—so respectful toward the pathos of the original, and so wary of Nabokov's more brazen comic endeavors, that many viewers, far from being outraged, will be surprised by the air of art-house politesse. In the title role, the skinny flirtations of Dominique Swain (and, on occasion, of her body double) are a decided improvement on the sluggish Sue Lyon, who starred in Stanley Kubrick's awkward assault on the novel in 1962. If you like Jeremy Irons, you will enjoy his panicky yet mournful embodiment of Humbert Humbert; if you don't like him, you'll probably enjoy it even more, and get a kick from his sneaky, self-deluding misdeeds. All movie adaptations of Nabokov fall short, by definition, but this one is the most graceful failure so far.—*Anthony Lane* (2/23-3/2/98) (Angelika Film Center, Cinema II, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

A Merry War—Director Robert Bierman's adaptation of George Orwell's novel "Keep the Aspidistra Flying" is a fairy tale: it takes place in a nineteen-thirties London that is perpetually sunny. The same cannot be said for the disposition of Gordon Comstock, played by Richard E. Grant—who looks (and acts) like an amalgam of Jimmy Stewart and Christopher Walken. Gordon quits his job as a successful ad copywriter to be a free man and a poet, but he's bad at both endeavors, selfishly mistreating his girlfriend (Helena Bonham Carter), his sister, his patron, and an innocent houseplant along the way. That's the dark, Christopher Walken side. The Jimmy Stewart side surfaces in a moment of revelation—on a bridge overlooking a river, no less.—*Ken Marks* (First & 62nd Cinemas and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Next Stop Wonderland—A smart-talking comedy, set in Boston, about two independent souls who are out of synch in their respective occupations: she's a nurse who should be a doctor; he's a plumber who should be a marine biologist. They're obviously made for each other, but writer-director-editor Brad Anderson playfully refuses to allow them to meet cute. Unlike the heavy-handed "Good Will Hunting," this gifted-Boston-misfit romance floats, adroitly mixing thoughtfulness, farce, and surprise.—*K.M.* (Angelika Film Center, Cinema II, and Lincoln Square.)

Nibelungen Saga (1923, 1924)—Utterly extraordinary: gigantic heroes, acres of studio-built sets, and a romantic mystique. Fritz Lang's bizarre, monumental German silent film, conceived as a tribute to the nation, is in two full-length parts—"Siegfried" and "Kriemhild's Revenge." The first tends to be static and ornamental; the second is the madder of the two, packed with contrapuntal visual rhythms. It makes a picture like "Caligari" seem as routine as a TV sitcom. At the ending of "Siegfried," Brünnhilde has had Siegfried killed, and his widow, Kriemhild, swears revenge. In the second picture, Kriemhild marries Attila the Hun and begins the devastation—massacres, flames, chaos. The influence of the painter Arnold Böcklin is evident; this film, in turn, was a strong influence on Eisenstein and Leni Riefenstahl.—*P.K.* (Museum of Modern Art; "Siegfried" plays Sept. 28-29.)

One True Thing—A drama, based on Anna Quindlen's novel, about a New York career woman (Renée Zellweger), her parents (Meryl Streep and William Hurt), and their newly forming adult relationship. Directed by Carl Franklin. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) (Beekman, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 34th Street Showplace, Waverly, and Ziegfeld.)

Permanent Midnight—Ben Stiller plays a Los Angeles television writer in this film based on the autobiography by Jerry Stahl. Written and directed by David Veloz. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square.)

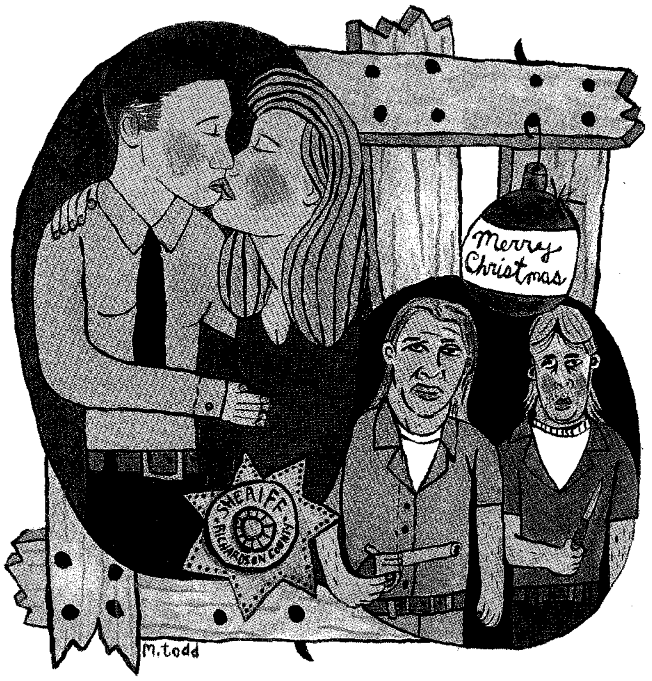
The Red Badge of Courage (1951)—Despite the mutilation (recorded in Lillian Ross's "Picture"), some seventy minutes remain of John Huston's film version of Stephen Crane's Civil War classic, and much of it is astonishing. Audie Murphy plays the hero and Bill Mauldin is his sidekick. Cinematography by Harold Rosson; the script is by Huston.—*P.K.* (American Museum of the Moving Image; Sept. 27.)

Return to Paradise—Three young men meet up in Malaysia and have such a ball that it's only a matter of time before fate intervenes. Sheriff (Vince Vaughn) and Tony (David Conrad) fly back to New York, leaving behind the sweetly spaced-out Lewis (Joaquin Phoenix) and, more important, a stash of hash. Two years later, Sheriff learns that Lewis was arrested in possession of the drugs and sentenced to death; only if the other two return to Malaysia and share the sentence—three years each in a hellhole—will their friend be allowed to live. It's a sharp hook for any plot, but Joseph Ruben's movie, written by Bruce Robinson and Wesley Strick, spends so long skewering us on the ethical predicament—How much should we suffer for the sake of others?—that pretty soon all you want is for Sheriff and Tony to make up their damn minds.—*A.L.* (Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.)

Saving Private Ryan—Steven Spielberg's new picture, one of his best, is a sandwich. The meat of the tale concerns a bunch of U.S. Army Rangers who are sent into Normandy to rescue the sole survivor of four brothers. On either side of this bold endeavor you get half an hour of unyielding combat: first, the D Day landings on Omaha Beach and, later, a consummate last stand in which too few Americans try to hold a bridge against too many Germans and too many tanks. Spielberg has arranged his violence into a semblance of pure disorder. The illusion holds, complete with severed limbs and wellsprings of blood, and it feels honorable; Spielberg's preachy movies can be an awful grind, but, apart from a disposable coda, this new work is too swift (and often too inaudible) to weigh you down.—*A.L.* (8/3/98) (Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, Murray Hill Cinemas, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, State, and Village Theatre VII.)

Slums of Beverly Hills—Natasha Lyonne, who played Woody Allen's daughter in "Everyone Says I Love You," is busting out all over as Vivian Abramowitz; her teen-age body is putting her through more changes than she can keep up with. She's also a member of a nomadic Jewish family desperately clinging to the fringes of the middle class in mid-seventies Southern California. Alan Arkin plays the proud, hapless father of a brood that's not dysfunctional, really, just deeply odd. Writer-director Tamara Jenkins hits on a visual style that perfectly reflects her script's endearing juxtaposition of wackiness, sweetness, and sorrow.—*K.M.* (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 3rd Avenue, and 62nd & Broadway.)

Snake Eyes—Set in Atlantic City, on the night of a heavyweight boxing match, Brian De Palma's new thriller features an over-emoting Nicolas Cage as Rick Santoro, a corrupt local detective who is loud and chummy and wears hideous shirts. When the Secretary of Defense (Joel Fabiani), who's in town to catch the fight, is assassinated, Santoro's moment of glory arrives: he steps in to help his old buddy, Navy Commander Kevin Dunne (Gary Sinise), cover up the fact that he left the Secretary unguarded, and orders the police to search for a suspicious-looking brunette in a blond wig (Carla Gugino). Santoro soon finds himself lost in the mists of a rapidly shifting story in which nothing is as it seems. In spite of its noirish glow, De Palma's thriller is oddly unsuspenseful.—*Daphne Merkin* (8/17/98) (Chelsea Cinemas, Embassy 3, Lincoln Square, and 72nd Street East.)



Opening Sept. 23, "The Brandon Teena Story."

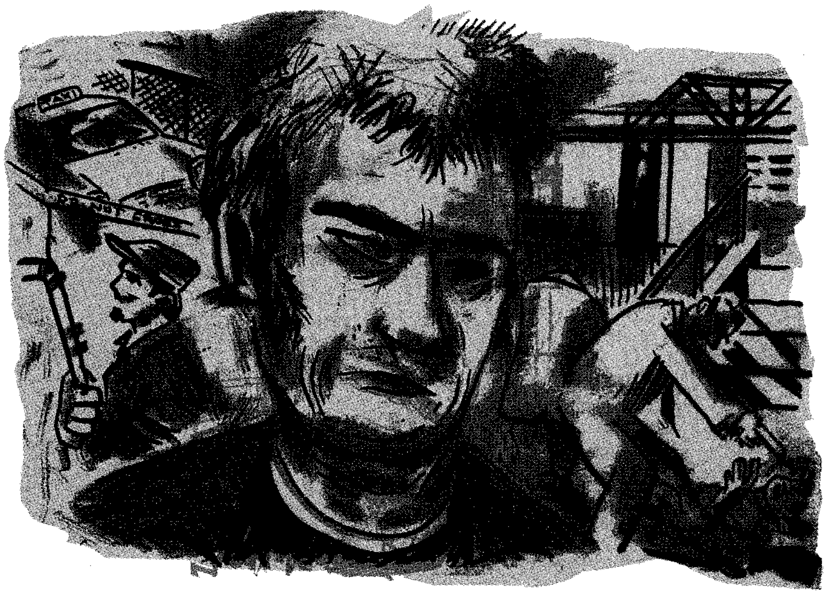
There's Something About Mary—The Farrelly Brothers, who have tipped the outrageousness scale before ("Dumb and Dumber," "Kingpin"), come up with some great new gross-out gags in this romantic comedy. The star, Cameron Diaz, in her Olivia Newton-John haircut, is the perfect naïve foil—she looks like she never knows what hit her. As the two loopy guys who are in love with her, Matt Dillon and Ben Stiller are garishly charming and full of desperate and irreverent ploys to get the girl. The film is packed with tasteless jokes (the best of them are crudely sexual), and it has a refreshing mean-spiritedness.—*Bruce Diones* (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Showplace, and Village East Cinemas.)

Touch of Evil—There have been three subtly different versions of Orson Welles's ornate thriller since it first came out, in 1958. The fourth should be the last: working from a memo that Welles wrote at the time, after the studio had messed with his original cut, producer Rick Schmidlin and editor Walter Murch have come as close to honoring the director's intentions as anyone ever will. At first glance, little has changed; the titles (and Henry Mancini's brassy theme) have disappeared from the celebrated opening shot, but from then on the basic thrust of this Mexican border tale (filmed in Venice, California) remains intact. We still have the manly Vargas (Charlton Heston) struggling to solve the case of the car bomb while his wife (Janet Leigh) feels the heat from a gang of local hoods; we are still thrown by the freakish cameos by Zsa Zsa Gabor and Mercedes McCambridge, and the horrific slaying—a kind of jazz strangulation—of the fleshly Grandi (Akim Tamiroff); and, of course, we still see Welles himself as police chief Hank Quinlan, looming over the action like a Falstaff gone to seed. If anything, the cuts and repairs make the work more fluid and less flamboyant; it was sometimes the studio, rather than Welles himself, who liked to go over the top. His scenes with brothel-keeper Marlene Dietrich have nothing to do with the plot and everything to do with the rotting heart of this amazing fable: the apotheosis of pulp.—*A.L.* (9/21/98) (Film Forum.)

Why Do Fools Fall in Love—Early on in this story of the doo-wop legend Frankie Lymon, there's a sequence in which the camera, standing in for the viewer, enters a rock palace from a busy city street in the mid-fifties. The honking car horns dissolve into the excited chatter of teen-agers in the lobby. Once through the doors of the auditorium, your eyes adjust to the darkness as you move down the aisle, taking it all in, from the balconies to the ornate ceiling to the group in the spotlight way down front. The closer you get to the stage, the more the music takes over: it's the majestic Platters singing "The Great Pretender," and up next are Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers. After that euphoric moment, it's all pretty much downhill for the talented and troubled Lymon (Larenz Tate), who left the Teenagers behind in 1957 and died of a drug overdose in 1968. The director, Gregory Nava, tells the story energetically, focussing on Frankie's three wives (Halle Berry, Lela Rochon, and Vivica A. Fox), who are all looking to get paid. Paul Mazursky is deliciously sleazy as Morris Levy, the president of Roulette Records (and corrupt thief).—*K.M.* (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, and Park & 86th Street Cinemas.)

Your Friends & Neighbors—Another dirty comedy of bad manners from director Neil LaBute. The contemptuous heroes of his last picture, "In the Company of Men," were

MARK TODD



Opening Sept. 25, Denis Leary in Ted Demme's "Monument Ave."

RUSSELL CHRISTIAN

venal enough, but, compared to the inhabitants of the new movie, they seem about as noxious as the Hardy Boys. This time we are introduced to two couples: Mary (Amy Brenneman) lives with Barry (Aaron Eckhart), while Terri (Catherine Keener) lives with Jerry (Ben Stiller). Jerry starts an affair with Mary (what does she see in him?), Terri falls for a gallery assistant called Cheri (Nastassja Kinski), and Barry, the only sensible one, continues to have sex with himself. It's hard to care about the damage these people do to each other, since most of it will strike the audience as richly deserved. Jason Patric plays Cary, a good-looking monster who has the nerve to suggest that, in a glum world, he's actually having fun.—*A.L.* (8/24-31/98) (East 85th Street, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and 19th Street East 6.)

ALSO PLAYING

THE AVENGERS: Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **BLADE:** Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, Olympia, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **CHICAGO CAB:** Quad Cinema. . . . **CUBE:** Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, and 19th Street East 6. . . . **DR. DOLITTLE:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE EEL:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema. . . . **54:** Embassy 1, Gotham Cinema, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **FIRELIGHT:** Angelika Film Center. . . . **THE GOVERNESS:** Art Greenwich Twin and First & 62nd Cinemas. . . . **LIKE IT IS:** Quad Cinema. . . . **MAFIA!:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **MARK TWAIN'S AMERICA:** Lincoln Square. . . . **MULAN:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE NEGOTIATOR:** Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, and 64th and 2nd. . . . **THE OPPOSITE OF SEX:** Art Greenwich Twin and 59th Street East Cinema. . . . **A PERFECT MURDER:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **π:** Angelika Film Center. . . . **ROUNDERS:** Coronet Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Olympia, Orpheum VII, State, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **RUSH HOUR:** Astor Plaza, Chelsea West, 84th Street Sixplex, Metro Cinema, Murray Hill Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Sutton, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **SIMON BIRCH:** Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema I, Guild, Lincoln Square, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **A SOLDIER'S DAUGHTER NEVER CRIES:** Paris. . . . **SOMEWHERE IN THE CITY:** Quad Cinema. . . . **THE TRUMAN SHOW** (reviewed in our issue of 6/15/98): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **UNMADE BEDS:** The Screening Room. . . . **WITHOUT LIMITS** (9/14/98): Lincoln Square and Village Theatre VII.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

New York Film Festival—The first programs in a seventeen-day series of international films. **AVERY FISHER HALL:** Sept. 25 at 9: "Celebrity" (Woody Allen; United States). . . . **ALICE TULLY HALL:** Sept. 25 at 8: "Celebrity." . . . Sept. 26 at 11:30 A.M.: "The Joyless Street" (1925, G. W. Pabst; a German silent film). . . . Sept. 26 at 3 and Sept. 27 at 7: "You're Laughing" (Paolo and Vittorio Taviani; Italy). . . . Sept. 26 at 6 and Sept. 27 at 1:30: "Gods and Monsters" (Bill Condon; United States). . . . Sept. 26 at 9 and Sept. 27 at 4:15: "Same Old Song" (Alain Resnais; France). . . . Sept. 27 at 9:45 and Sept. 29 at 6: "I Stand Alone" (Gasper Noé; France). . . . Sept. 28 at 6 and Sept. 29 at 9: "Dr. Akagi" (Shohei Imamura; Japan). . . . Sept. 28 at 8:45: "Khroustaliov, My Car!" (Alexeï Guerman; Russia and France). (For tickets, call 875-5050.)

Film Forum 2 and 3, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—**THEATRE 2:** Through Sept. 24: "Touch of Evil" (†). . . . Sept. 25-27 and Sept. 29-Oct. 1: "Me and My Brother" (1968; Robert Frank) and "Pull My Daisy" (1959, Alfred Leslie and Frank). . . . Sept. 27-28: "The General" (1926, Buster Keaton) and "Buster Keaton Shorts" (†) . . . **THEATRE 3:** "Touch of Evil" (†).

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A program of films made by the German UFA studios. Sept. 24 at 2:30 and Sept. 26 at 2: "The Last Laugh" (†). . . . Sept. 24 at 6: "Faust" (1926, F. W. Murnau; silent, with German intertitles). . . . Sept. 25 at 2:30 and Sept. 28 at 6: "Madame Du Barry" (1919, Ernst Lubitsch; a German silent film). . . . Sept. 25 at 6: "The Blue Angel" (1929, Josef von Sternberg; in German, with no English subtitles). . . . Sept. 25 at 8 and Sept. 27 at 2: "Homecoming" (1928, Joe May; a German silent film). . . . Sept. 26 at 5: "Metropolis" (1926, Fritz Lang; silent, with German intertitles). . . . Sept. 27 at 5 and Sept. 29 at 2:30: "Spies" (1928, Lang; a German silent film). . . . Sept. 28 at 2:30 and Sept. 29 at 6: "Nibelungen Saga" (†). . . . ¶ Sept. 25 at 3: A program of seven short films, by Bill Morrison and others. . . . ¶ Sept. 25 at 6:30, Sept. 26 at 2:30, and Sept. 28 at 12:30: Nearly a hundred award-winning British commercials made for television and the cinema in 1997. . . . ¶ Sept. 26 at 5 and Sept. 27 at 2:30: A program of four short films by Ken Jacobs. . . . ¶ Sept. 28 at 6:30: "October" (1927, Sergei Eisenstein; a Russian silent film). . . . ¶ Sept. 29 at 6:30: "Enthusiasm, Symphony of the Don Basin" (1931, Dziga Vertov; in Russian, with no English subtitles).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—A program of Chinese films, made between 1933 and 1949; in Mandarin, with English subtitles. Sept. 23 at 6:15: "Crossroads" (1937, Shen Xiling). . . . Sept. 23 at 8:30: "Tears of a Mother" (1937, Zhu Shilin). . . . Sept. 24 at 6:15: "Along the Sungari River" (1947, Jin Shan). . . . Sept. 25 at 6:15: "Crows and Sparrows" (1949, Zheng Junli). . . . Sept. 25 at 8:30: "The Lights of Ten Thousand Homes" (1949, Shen Fu). . . . ¶ A program of films by the Egyptian director Youssef Chahine; in Arabic, with English subtitles. Sept. 26 at 2 and Sept. 27 at 4:30: "Cairo Station" (1958). . . . Sept. 26 at 4:30, Sept. 28 at 4 and 8:45, and Sept. 29 at 6:15: "It's You My Love" (1957). . . . Sept. 26 at 7: "The Land" (1969). . . . Sept. 26 at 9:30 and Sept. 27 at 2: "Alexandria, Why?" (1978). . . . Sept. 27 at 7: "Once Upon a Time the Nile" (1970). . . . Sept. 28 at 6:30 and Sept. 29 at 4 and 8:45: "Sky of Hell" (1954).

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—A program of films directed by John Huston. Sept. 26 at 2: "Freud" (1962). . . . Sept. 26 at 5: "The Night of the Iguana" (1964). . . . Sept. 27 at 2: "The Red Badge of Courage" (†). . . . Sept. 27 at 3:30: "Moby Dick" (1956).

A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St.—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On Sept. 27 at 7, the feature will be "Flamingo Road" (1949, Michael Curtiz).

THEATRE ADDRESSES

(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
86th Street East Twin, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Embassy 1, 2, and 3, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Guild, 33 W. 50th St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
Regency, Broadway at 67th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
Thalia, Broadway at 95th St. (802-7247).
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

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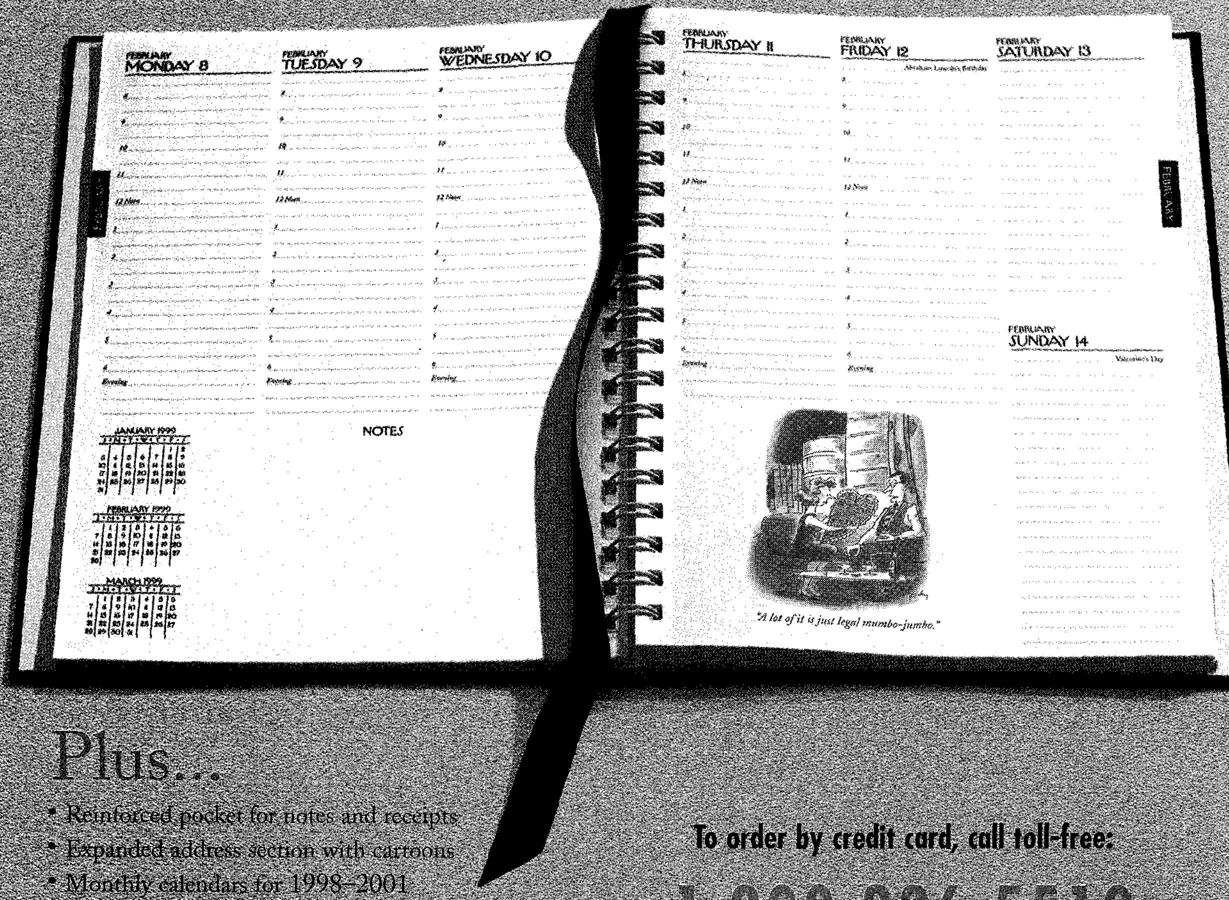
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FEBRUARY WEDNESDAY 10
FEBRUARY THURSDAY 11
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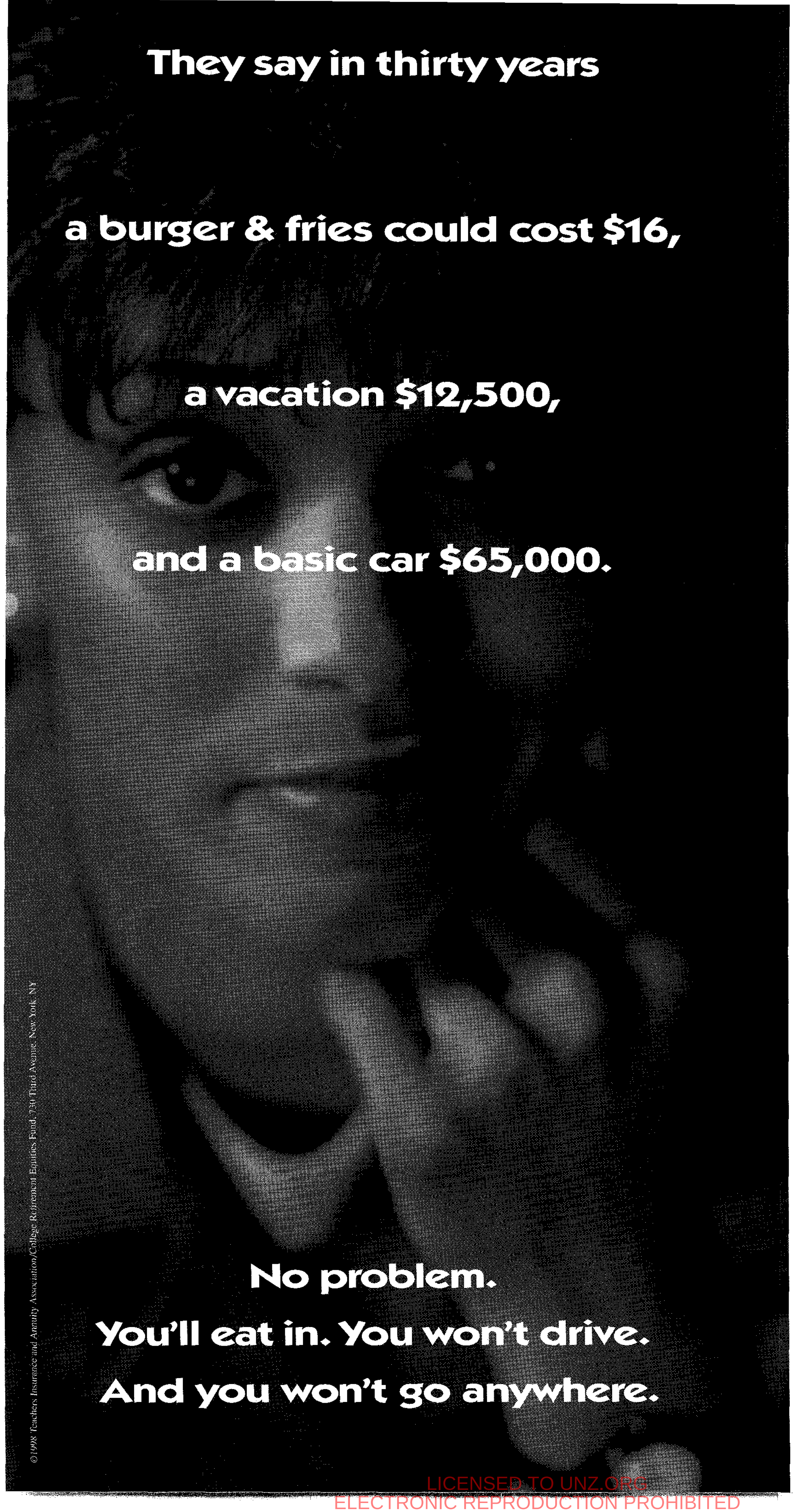
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THE NEW YORKER

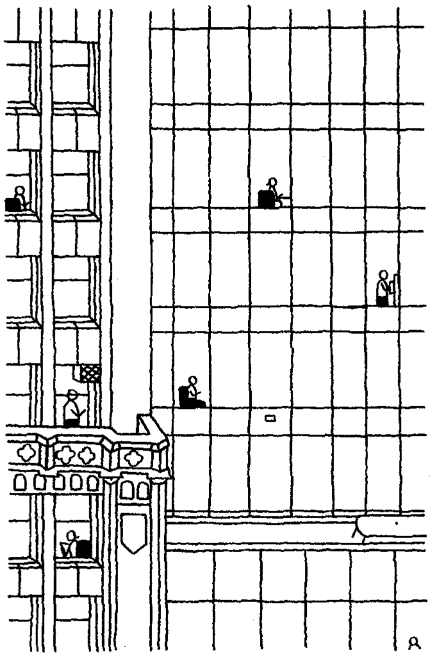
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT

Who really exploited Monica Lewinsky?

The Starr report has made life harder for the scattered feminists who have tried to make the case, always a shaky one, that Monica Lewinsky was the victim of sexual opportunism at the hands of her boss. Even the most cursory reading—the kind that begins at Section II of the narrative, "1995: Initial Sexual Encounters," and skims breathlessly through to conclude at Section VII, "May 1997: Termination of Sexual Relationship"—makes it clear that Lewinsky was the agent of her own enthrallment. But the report does, nonetheless, reveal in vivid detail the relentless sexual exploitation of a young woman who has been cornered by an older, vastly more powerful man. The man in question is Kenneth Starr, and his report isn't an account of sexual abuse; it *is* sexual abuse. It's a metaphorical mugging of Lewinsky.

Substitute sexual intercourse for the verbal intercourse in which Starr forced Lewinsky to participate, and the whole investigation looks very much like an assault. First, Starr drives Lewinsky to bare herself to him, pressuring her with months of intimidatory leaks, threats, and proxy roughings up (as in the subpoenaing of Lewinsky's mother, Marcia Lewis, who, with her expensively youthful appearance, made a fine stand-in for her daughter). He ransacks her computer not just for her correspondence but for evidence of her private thoughts, rooting out drafts of letters she apparently had no intention of sending. He rifles through her closet, trophy-hunting. And he compels her, in her grand-jury testimony, to speak with a specificity somewhere between the pornographic and the gynecological. The report doesn't tell us precisely what Starr's people asked her; he used the trick, cravenly familiar to all journalists, of omitting those tawdry questions which prompted the revelations. But it is fair to assume that he didn't get the girl to talk about her bouts of phone sex or to detail the precise coördinates of the Presidential ejaculation without indulging in some serious probing. And then, having turned Lewinsky inside out, Starr exposes her to public view, stripped naked. It may be true that no public figure has had his sexual privacy so violated as Bill Clinton has, but it's also true that no figure, public or private, has had her inner life so rawly and mercilessly exposed as Monica Lewinsky has. Having the world know of your Oval Office gropings is humiliating, but how much more humiliating to have the world know of your sad, deluded fantasies about being the second Mrs. Clinton.



It will be argued that Lewinsky, ultimately, surrendered eagerly to Starr—that she was dying to rat on Clinton after he repudiated her on national television. But this is a little like saying that the victim of sexual assault who decides, in the end, that her best hope for safety lies in not biting or scratching her assailant was asking for it all along. Lewinsky, on the evidence of her own testimony, is hardly a sympathetic character, but that doesn't excuse Starr's wanton pursuit and use of her. Starr wanted to see the President laid low, and Lewinsky got laid low in the process. And now Bill Clinton is not the only man in Washington whose profoundest gratification has come from Monica opening her mouth.

—Rebecca Mead

WIND FROM WASHINGTON

Old White House type: railsplitter.
New White House type: hairsplitter.

DIC TION ARY

Pity a man in the grip of his lawyers. Our hapless, interndiddling, lame-excuse-mongering, oops-I-made-a-boo-boo, come-to-Jesus President is such a man. Back when the President's lawyers were negotiating with Starr's vice squad over the logistics of his testimony to the Monica grand jury, they figured it was a victory that Starr agreed to let him testify from home via closed-circuit television, rather than hauling his sorry butt down to the courthouse for a perp walk through a mob of shouting journaloids. The solemn majesty of the Map Room, the familiar face on the screen, "Live from the White House, the President

ILLUSTRATION BY LAURENT CILLUFFO

of the United States"—wow, just like on TV! That'll show those shabby shamuses, the Clinton legal dream team presumably reasoned. There were some advisers who disagreed. They thought it might actually be advantageous to stage a "High Noon" moment in the capital's mean streets, with the President striding in, jaw set, to take on the bad guys. Once inside, he could see the jurors face to face, make eye contact with them, maybe break through their Stockholm syndrome by subtly allying himself with them against their captors. But these advisers were not lawyers, so they lost the argument. And, as an afterthought, the dream team said O.K. to the idea of a videotape, in case some of the jurors happened to be out sick that day. Gore Vidal, the novelist and occasional candidate for office, once famously said that it was his policy never to turn down an opportunity to have sex or go on television. That was pre-Starr, though.

So: Big mistake. Arranging for the President to star in America's unfunniest home video was not his lawyers' deftest move, as is likely to be obvious on Monday, when the full-hour director's cut comes to a television set near you. But it wasn't their only howler. Such, at any rate, is the general opinion in Washington. Shoulda settled the Jones case. Coulda apologized earlier and louder. Woulda been smarter to keep the lawyers off the political talk shows the weekend after "Starr: The Report" opened. (It was getting bad reviews all by itself.) And the biggest mistake, all agree, is an ongoing one: sticking to the strategy of legal and definitional hairsplitting.

But hold on. Hairsplitting isn't so bad. It has a noble spiritual history—a relevant point, given that this is a scandal in which prayer breakfasts and oaths to God have their place alongside Gap dresses and "curiously strong" mints. Hairsplitting is Talmudic. Hairsplitting is Jesuitical. (Hairsplitting, admittedly, is not Southern Baptist; but ours is an ecumenical, multicultural age.) The ecclesiastical tradition of drawing fine distinctions has migrated from the interpretation of divine law to the interpretation of secular law, in the clutches of which the President finds himself. The Washington élite tells him crossly that he's only making matters worse by letting his lawyers cut the ground from under his apologies with their insistence that his under-oath attempts to throw the hounds off the scent were "legally accurate." Drop the double-talk, the élites say. Be a man. Admit you committed perjury.

It's not too difficult to understand why the President won't take the bait. To admit perjury would be to hand his enemies a possibly fatal syllogism: Perjury is a crime; Clinton admits he committed perjury; therefore Clinton is a criminal. But not all prevaricating is lying, and not all lying is perjury, and the lawyers may be right in insisting that such distinctions are wider than a hairsbreadth. Not all homicide is murder, either, and not all unauthorized borrowing is larceny. When the sole aim of your questioners is not to bring out any facts that everybody doesn't already know but to trap you into committing on the spot a victimless crime that will retrospectively justify an inquiry that until that moment had been as fruitless as it was vindictive, maybe you're entitled to split the odd hair.

Clinton has been taxed with using language sloppily, even corruptly, with intent to deceive. And, boy, did he ever intend to deceive. Even he has not been so shameless as to deny that. But his—and his lawyers'—use of language has been anything but sloppy. On the contrary, it has been incredibly (in both senses) precise. Some of his answers are like the clues in this magazine's cryptic crossword: they sound straightforward enough, but only after you break them down, chop them up, and look at the shards from unexpected angles do they yield up their actual, carefully calibrated meaning.

Anyway, hairsplitting goes back a long way when it comes to sex, as anyone who has ever been, or dated, a "technical virgin" can attest. If you're in a tight spot, is it really all that ludicrous to maintain, as Clinton apparently does, that if you have not had sexual intercourse with a person then you have not "had sex" with that person? Last Friday, in a rare not-overtly-about-Monica moment, came reports of a new Centers for Disease Control study showing that fewer teen-agers "had sex" last year than was the case in 1991. By this the C.D.C. did not mean that fewer teenagers are kissing each other, feeling each other up, talking dirty to each other, or even offering each other oral gratification. It meant that fewer are, how you say, going all the way. Sex is sex, we keep being told. To be sure. But, as the Big He helpfully pointed out to the grand jury, "it depends on what the meaning of the word 'is' is."

—Hendrik Hertzberg

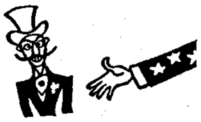
THE LIVING END

Before long the end
Of the beginning
Begins to bend
To the beginning
Of the end you live
With some misgivings
About what you did.

—Samuel Menashe

PRIMARY JOURNAL

A retooled Chuck Schumer wins big.



In the messy, premillenarian drift of American politics, last week's tidy New York primary-election results—provided by the state's chronically chaotic Democrats, of all people—were an unexpected model of order and symmetry: two moderate males, lifelong professional politicians from the outer boroughs, defeated two flashy females (and assorted others) in the primaries for governor and United States senator. City Council Speaker Peter Vallone, of Queens, was chosen to run against George Pataki for governor, and Congressman Charles Schumer, of Brooklyn, will run against Alfonse D'Amato for the United States Senate. Both men won mammoth victories. And both celebrated at the Grand Hyatt, in ballrooms at opposite ends of the same floor, although most of the excitement was down toward the Schumer end, as Vallone isn't given much of a chance against Pataki.

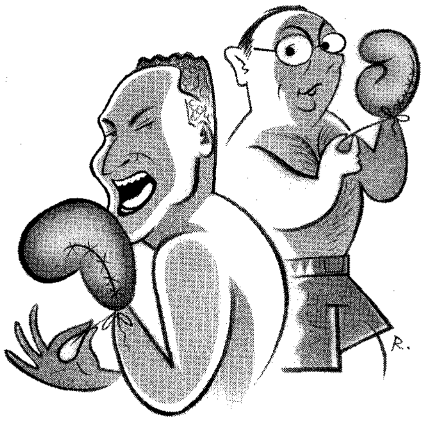
Chuck Schumer is one of those people who are extremely who they are, which is often a bit too much: he's intelligent, hardworking, intense, but also relentless, a sharklike fund-raiser, and almost comically ambitious. Among reporters who cover Congress, he was infamous for his preternatural homing ability when it came to live microphones. Offstage, he appeared the eternal supplicant, a large man bent slightly at the waist, leaning in toward *you*. His manner had a nervous, adolescent quality to it—like his voice, which emerges precariously from his nasal passages, on a seemingly endless quest for its proper level.

But something happened to Schumer during this year's campaign; in a less cynical era, it might have been called growth. He started poorly. He trailed Geraldine Ferraro by thirty points in some polls. The political consensus last spring was that Schumer was too "Brooklyn"—a euphemism, of course—to succeed in the suburbs and upstate. He remained calm, however. He saved his money for television. He refused to attack his opponents, a cunning bit of high-mindedness: as it happened, there was no need to go negative. Ferraro proved a perfunctory foe; her early success was mostly a consequence of her celebrity. (Mark Green was a more substantive presence in the race, but his activism was a reminder to newly pragmatic Democrats of their party's lack of success when it looked left for candidates.)

Over the summer, on the strength of a tidal wave of television ads, the congressman began to insinuate himself into the public consciousness. But it was a retooled Schumer: more sober and disciplined and mature. "This happened to Koch in the 1977 mayoral campaign," Bob Tierney, who was counsel to Mayor Koch, said as he surveyed the sweaty scene at the Schumer victory party. "And Schumer reminds me of Ed. They're even beginning to look a little alike."

Koch himself will support his old buddy Alfonse D'Amato this year. The morning after the election, D'Amato aired a funny endorsement ad, featuring Koch and Rudy Giuliani. D'Amato will be formidable. He is a superb politician, but he has also been a lucky one. He has never faced someone like Schumer before—a moderate, well-funded opponent who comes from the same part of the jungle as D'Amato does, and is fluent in the ways of Washington, money-raising, and pothole politics. And Schumer has several other advantages: he has been an advocate for gun control, which D'Amato has opposed; and he supports abortion rights, which D'Amato also opposes.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ROBERT RISKO



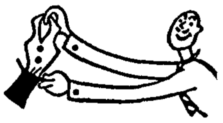
Chuck Schumer and Alfonse D'Amato

The morning after his victory, Schumer called from a school-bus stop in Park Slope, where he was dropping off his nine-year-old daughter. "I have learned a lot this year," he said. "I remember in June I was at an Italian festival in Buffalo, handing out leaflets—and I've gotta tell you, the response was nothing to write home about. Twenty minutes into it, a big, burly guy says, 'So who're you running against?' When I told him, he said, 'Oh, that's another story. Let me have one of those leaflets.' Ever since, the line has been 'I'm Chuck Schumer and I'm running against Al D'Amato for Senate.' You know, I'd thought about running for governor, but now I know I'm doing the right thing." He added, almost convincingly, "I just feel an inner peace."

—JOE KLEIN

DEPT. OF MAKING DO

Rebuilding the temple with the help of a society savant.



THE Rosh Hashanah rescue of Central Synagogue, the Manhattan landmark that was ravaged by fire in late August, began more than a year ago, in the Long Island back yard of Charles and Bunny Koppelman. There, on a platform erected over the swimming pool, the party designer Robert Isabell had fashioned a canvas replica of the Spanish Moorish Revival synagogue large enough to seat all five hundred guests at the wedding of the Koppelmans' daughter Jennifer. From mosaic floor to minarets, from stained-glass windows to wood-inlay doors, Isabell virtually matched the original. Even Central Synagogue's rabbi, Peter Rubinstein, said that his first reaction was that the pews had been lifted from the sanctuary, back on Park Avenue.

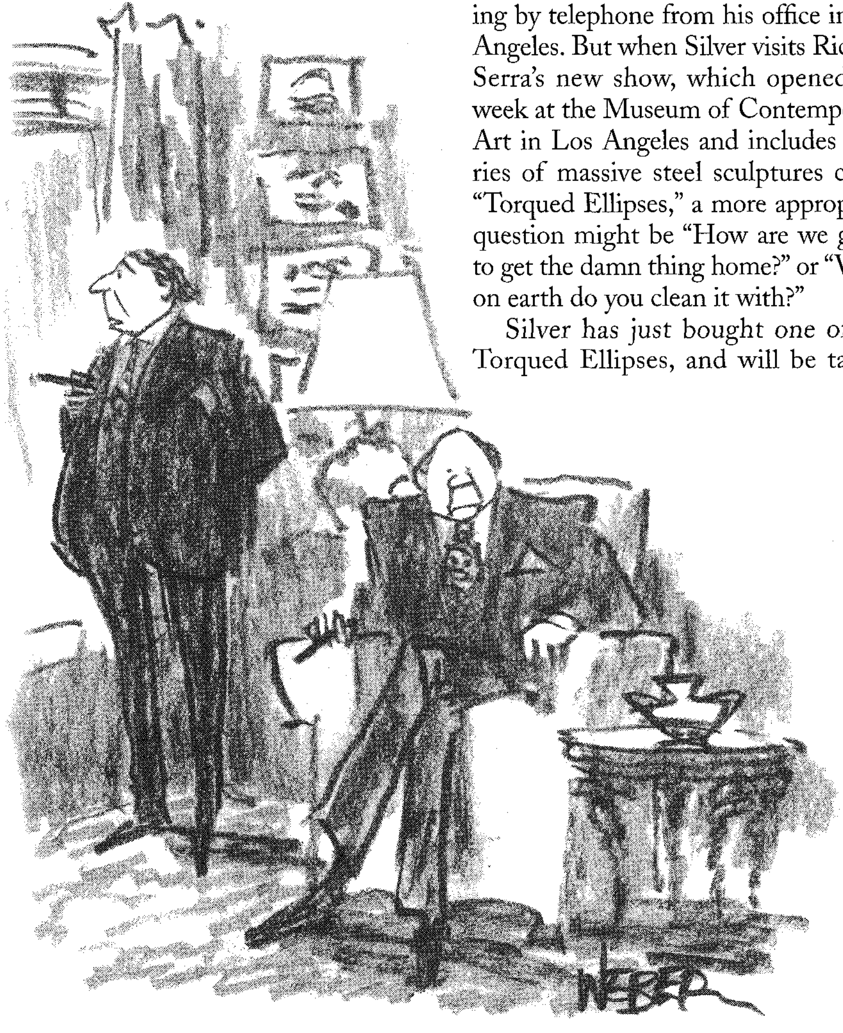
Rabbi Rubinstein remembered Isabell's inspired reconstruction late last month as he scrambled to arrange the synagogue's High Holy Days services-in-exile. First, he had to rent a building large enough to hold almost four thousand worshippers, the Seventh Regiment Armory. Next, the State of New York, which owns the armory, had to waive the usual ban on religious activity on public property. Then, with less than three weeks to go until Rosh Hashanah, somebody had to figure out how to gussy up a drafty, Spartan space better suited to military convocations than to the spiritual sort. And, because of the New York Armory Antiques Show, there would be less than twenty-four hours to redecorate the vast room before the first Rosh Hashanah service.

Enter Robert Isabell, Protestant from the Midwest and designer, director, and producer of parties for the élite. From his warehouse in the meatpacking district, where bouquets of dried celosia rather than sides of beef dangle from ceiling hooks, Isabell already faced a bustling fall. In the week leading up to Rosh Hashanah, there was a store opening for Alberta Ferretti, a *Vogue* party for Oprah Winfrey, a *Men's Health* event, and a wedding on Martha's Vineyard. In the following months loomed Grand Central Terminal's gala reopening, the installation of the White House Christmas decorations, and a royal wedding in Saudi Arabia. But as soon as Rabbi Rubinstein asked if Isabell could help re-create the synagogue he said yes, agreeing to do the job at cost.

This endeavor, though, was going to be more complicated than simply restaging the Koppelman wedding, which had been an event of unalloyed celebration. "We want it to be comfortable but not beautiful," Rabbi Rubinstein explained to Isabell. "We need a sense that we're nomads, that we're displaced."

While Isabell was still on the phone, he laid out his plan—something simple, understated, reverent. He could match the synagogue's carpet. He could drape mulberry fabric around the perimeter of the room. He could hang behind the altar a theatrical drop painted to resemble the sanctuary's Moorish interior. And he could bring from Central Synagogue the actual bimah, damaged and water-stained though it was. "Even if it's damaged, it does something to you," Isabell said last week. "It tells you that everything wasn't destroyed. That it's going to be repaired. That we're still here."

For Rabbi Rubinstein, the plan solved not only a practical problem but a theological one. So, as Isabell set to work, the rabbi drafted a sermon about the Hebrews of the Book of Exodus, who carried their tabernacle with them during forty years of wandering.



"My heart goes out to the White House lawyers."

"People are going to feel sad at first, and then grateful and proud," Bunny Koppelman predicted of the services in Isabell's sanctuary. "Sad that their synagogue was deeply hurt—and that they were deeply hurt as a result. But then elevated by what Bob Isabell can do. He's a man of dreams whose dreams are fulfilled." —SAMUEL G. FREEDMAN

ARTS AND CRAFTS

A Richard Serra fan ponders the artist's demographics.

JOEL SILVER, the producer of "Die Hard" and the "Lethal Weapon" movies, knows a thing or two about art, and one of the things he knows is that he likes owning it. "I always go shopping when I go to a museum: 'Which Matisse would you want?' 'Which Giacometti would you take home?' " he said last week, speaking by telephone from his office in Los Angeles. But when Silver visits Richard Serra's new show, which opened last week at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles and includes a series of massive steel sculptures called "Torqued Ellipses," a more appropriate question might be "How are we going to get the damn thing home?" or "What on earth do you clean it with?"

Silver has just bought one of the Torqued Ellipses, and will be taking possession of it after the L.A. show, thus becoming one of the small number of Serra aficionados who actually own a Serra, the artist's work being prohibitively large for most collectors. (Another Serra-owner is Leonard Riggio, the C.E.O. of Barnes & Noble, who bought three of the sculptures for the permanent collection of the Dia Center for the Arts, in New York, and has commissioned a Serra for his Bridgehampton estate, where it will command several acres of real estate.) In fact, Serra's work is prohibitively large for many museums. At MOCA, a gigantic doorway had to be smashed through one of the building's walls in order to bring the sculptures inside. "We pulled them through with a mechanical rig that had been constructed for reinforcing the freeways," Serra explains.

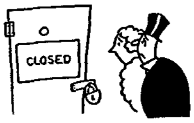
The pieces consist of two high, curved walls of steel, each wall measuring about twenty feet by thirty feet. "I think Serra's art is kind of like my movies," Silver said. "They are very big and loud and controversial, and they kind of make a statement, and they are very kind of young-male-oriented." Silver's own Serra, however, is going to be rather more middle-aged-married-man-oriented: Silver bought it with his fiancée, Karyn Fields, whom he will be marrying next July, and the two are planning to install it on the grounds of the house they are currently building in Brentwood, with the help of the architect Ricardo Legorreta. The couple are already considering the ways in which the sculpture may enhance their marital life. "The Serra show is very sexy," Fields said last week. "There is something really kind of erotic about it. When we were there looking at it, everyone was saying, 'What are you going to do in it, Karyn?' It makes you think of all these things you want to try in it. I can definitely nude-sunbathe in there and nobody can see me."

Silver says he's heard that the enormous Serra sculpture in the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao has been used for even more unconventional pursuits. "I was told that they keep finding condoms in the Serra in Bilbao, which means that it is *extremely* sexy," he said. "They won't find them in the one at our house, though."

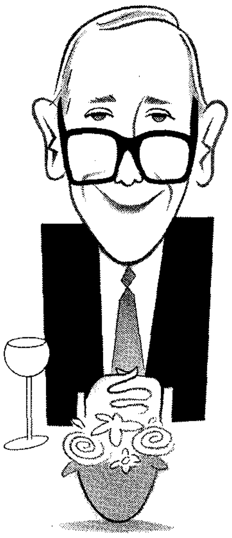
—REBECCA MEAD

DEPT. OF WATERING HOLES

Remembering one of the gatekeepers to the nineteen-eighties.



Glenn Bernbaum, the proprietor of Mortimer's, who died two weeks ago, left a characteristically autocratic will, and one that has startled his regulars. He bequeathed the hundred-year-old building, on Lexington Avenue at Seventy-fifth Street, in which the restaurant was situated, and where he also lived, to Columbia Presbyterian Hospital, and he made it plain that he wanted his restaurant closed down, immediately and permanently.


Glenn Bernbaum

The will also states that Bernbaum, who died at the age of seventy-six, wanted no memorial service. Bernbaum's friends are flummoxed by this command, too, and not just because the perfect partygiver had vetoed his last party. "In our social system, memorials are final," the designer Mary McFadden, one of the place's regulars, said the other day. "So it's not final. It's like he just . . . disappeared." Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., another regular, also feels the need for closure. "This is one of those end-of-an-era deaths," he said last week. "Glenn created something. He put together this curious combination of social people, theatrical people, journalists, academics, and so on, and he created a club."

The will, of course, reflects the man. You might think that the proprietor of a restaurant frequented both by Manhattan's most demanding social locomotives and by grandees from overseas would be a diplomatic fellow, always on the alert for ruffled feathers. Think again. Suggest such a description of Glenn Bernbaum to the said locomotives and grandees, and get ready for some hoots. Bernbaum was a bright, grumpy, genial, crotchety, and thoroughly engaging man. When he was in a good mood, he would glow like a pink ember, but when something displeased him—not a rare event, frankly—he had a full repertoire of dismal groans and exclamations along the lines of "Ugh!" John Richardson, the art historian, recalled meeting Bernbaum: "At first, I thought Glenn was a drunken curmudgeon. He would come and sit at your table and flick ash in your drink. I thought he was absolutely intolerable. I can't remember how or why—it was like St. Paul and the flash of light—but I suddenly got the *point* of Glenn."

All these traits made for an unstuffy atmosphere in Mortimer's. "I brought Garbo in once," Sam Green, the art dealer, said. "You couldn't take her to a restaurant *anywhere*, because she would cause such a sensation. But you could take her into Mortimer's and she would be kicked around like everybody else."

Bernbaum, a native of Philadelphia, was an executive with Custom Shops, a New York chain of menswear stores, when he opened Mortimer's, in 1976. Behind the wood bar he hung a portrait of a long-haired young man, supposedly "Mortimer," painted by Kurt Vonnegut's daughter, Edy. The main room had brick walls, and it was pleasant but not remotely fancy, and it caught on at once.

The longevity of the place was no accident. Bernbaum was a loyalist. "During my first trial, he offered to send a man over with a hot meal," said Claus von Bulow, who could not exactly have been called a social draw at the time. "I just thought that was an awfully encouraging message to get."

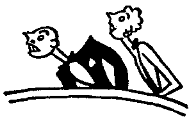
In the end, Glenn Bernbaum's last whims may well be ignored. Robert Caravaggi, Mortimer's maître d', and Stephen Attoe, the longtime chef, are planning to reopen under another name—if possible in the same venue. "If there were to be a restaurant there called McGillycuddy's, I don't think that would bother Glenn," said Richard Golub, Bernbaum's lawyer.

That plan is up in the air. The matter of the non-memorial, on the other hand, is not. "I feel we should get together and do something," the designer Mica Ertegun said. Other friends agree, and it looks like this fall's Fête de Famille, the AIDS benefit that Bernbaum had organized at Mortimer's for eleven years, will become a party in his honor. This disrespect of Glenn Bernbaum's wishes might, of course, be just what he was counting on.

—Anthony Haden-Guest

STARRSTRUCK

The President's dilemma intrudes on a night at the opera.



On the Friday after Labor Day, the day that the Starr report was posted on the Internet, a new production of Handel's "Partenope" opened at the New York City Opera. "Partenope" has a small cast—six singers, one of whom is a mezzo-soprano pretending to be a man. She is really Rosmira, the Princess of Cyprus, and she has come in disguise to Queen Partenope's court, in Naples, in search of her lover, Prince Arsace, who has abandoned her and is now Partenope's chief suitor. Rosmira seems to think that she can get Arsace back if she also pursues Partenope. Plots were not Handel's strong suit. You come for the music and the vocal gymnastics.

About halfway into the first act, after Arsace has figured out that the new guy at court is really his old girlfriend, Rosmira tells him what a jerk he is. He has lied to her, he has betrayed her, he is untrustworthy. Rosmira gets more and more worked up. Arsace looks alternately sheepish and sly, he presses his forehead against the wall and winces. Their feelings are conveyed through a beautiful duet with Baroque ornamentation. But during the performance that Friday, the two singers were suddenly drowned out by a great roar of laughter that washed over several bars of music. The audience was reacting to a line of the English translation, which appeared in foot-high letters on the supertitle screen: "I admit my mistake if you'll forgive me." By the next performance, five days later, the moment for the joke seemed to have passed, and the allusion went unregistered. The Zeitgeist moves fast.

—Sharon DeLano

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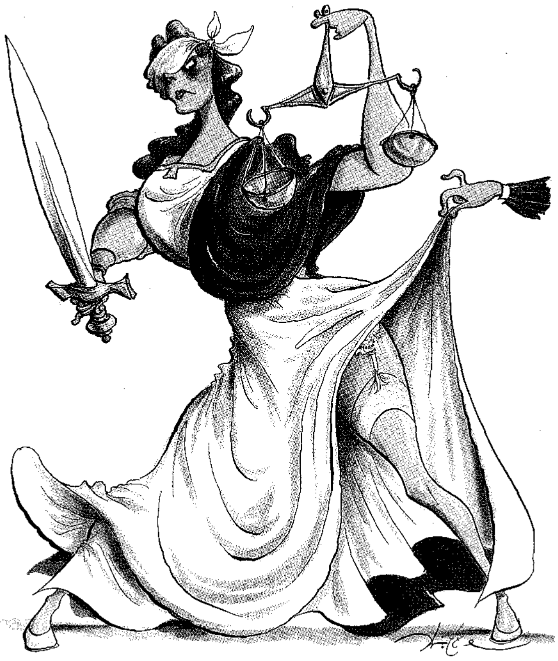
ANNALS OF LAW

JURISPRURIENCE

Graphic sexual evidence tends to get people's attention, as lawyers (including President Clinton) knew even in the pre-Monica era.

BY JEFFREY ROSEN

To answer the question that is on many people's minds—"Why do I have to know about Monica Lewinsky's bra hooks?"—you must journey in time back to 1991, when William Kennedy Smith was acquitted of rape. Smith insisted that his accuser had consented to sex but then became angry about something he said, and that only then did she claim that he had sexually assaulted her. The alleged victim testified that Smith had been charming when she met him at a local bar but suddenly turned violent after she accompanied him to the Kennedy compound in Palm Beach. To demonstrate that Smith had a propensity to act that way, the prosecution tried to offer testimony from three other women who said that he had assaulted them in a social setting. But the judge refused to let the jury hear evidence about Smith's sexual past. That refusal outraged many women and built up pressure for legal reform. At the time, Deborah L. Rhode, a feminist legal scholar at Stanford, told a reporter that the Smith trial was "a textbook illustration of what rape victims and sexual-assault victims have long claimed, which is that they're assaulted twice in the process of trying to prove it." Rhode was recently hired by Democrats on the House Judiciary Committee as their deputy counsel for the impeachment inquiry.



Prurient evidence can be used to tip the scales of justice—against both the accuser and the accused.

MICHAEL WITTE

In Congress, Susan Molinari, then a Republican representative from New York, introduced changes to the federal rules of evidence which would allow juries in sexual-assault and child-molestation cases to consider evidence that the accused had committed similar crimes in the past. (Bob Dole introduced a companion bill in the Senate.) Yet a broad cross-section of judges, legal scholars, and congressional Democrats opposed these revisions, in part because they feared that prosecutors might dredge up earlier offenses for which the defendant had never been charged. More generally, some opponents believed that graphic sexual details were likely to be so inflammatory that a jury hearing them would seek to punish the defendant for what it perceived to be immoral behavior, whether or not it was convinced of his guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. Moreover, critics of the legislation warned, the proposed definition of "sexual assault"—which included any attempted contact, "without consent, between any part of the defendant's body or an object and the genitals or anus of another person"—was dangerously broad. In their view, Molinari's zeal to "protect the public from rapists and child molesters," as she put it, had produced language that could apply to any fanny-pinching executive, so that the proposed rules would affect not only rape trials but also garden-variety sexual-harassment investigations. When I spoke with Molinari recently, she said, with a touch of defensiveness, "That was not my focus at the time."

At first, Molinari's proposals drew little support. Then Bill Clinton was elected President, with the help of women voters. "Clinton basically assisted me in passing that legislation," Molinari said. When Clinton's crime bill stalled in the House, in 1994, she told me, the President called her and asked what he could do to win her support. She agreed to endorse the legislation if the President accepted her amendments about admitting the evidence of previous offenses by defendants in sex trials. "He told me that he was shocked that it wasn't part of the bill, and he supported it," Molinari recalled. When the President signed the crime bill, in September of 1994, he declared, "We together are taking a big step toward bringing the laws of our land back into line with the values of our people, and beginning to restore the line between right and wrong."

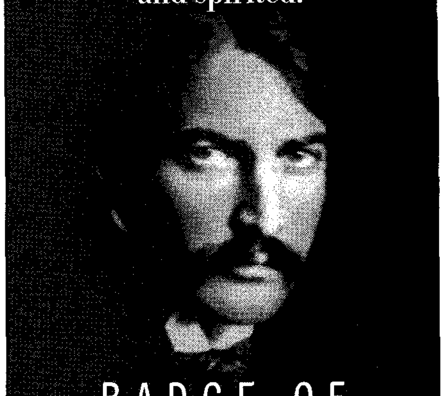
Perhaps Clinton should have paid more attention to the warnings from the legal establishment. By including Molinari's amendments to the rules of evidence (No. 413 in criminal cases and No. 415 in civil cases), he may also, unwittingly, have taken a giant step toward destroying his Presidency. Late last year, lawyers for Paula Jones amended their legal complaint to allege that Clinton had "put his hand on Plaintiff's leg and started sliding it toward the hem of Plaintiff's culottes, apparently attempting to reach Plaintiff's pelvic area." The original complaint had not included this detail, and it clearly was added to help establish a sexual assault within the meaning of the new federal rules, so that Jones's lawyers could try to introduce other incidents from the President's past. Eventually, investigators working for Jones turned up seven "Jane Doe"s who were rumored to have had sexual encounters with the President. Though Jones's harassment claim was widely judged to be weak on the law, her lawyers apparently calculated that if jurors heard enough sleazy sexual details about the President they might be inclined to punish him for his bad character, regardless of whether they were convinced that his conduct met the legal definition of harassment.

As it turned out, of course, Judge Susan Webber Wright dismissed the Jones suit in April, on the ground that even if Jones's allegations about Clinton's conduct were true she didn't have a case. By then, however, Jones's lawyers had been able to depose Clinton about his contacts with other women—and, using a definition that expanded on the language of Molinari's rule, about whether he had had "sexual relations" with one of the Jane Does, Monica Lewinsky. Now, five months later, Kenneth Starr has submitted an impeachment report to Congress, alleging that Clinton lied under oath and obstructed justice in the Jones case and in the course of the investigation that grew out of it. By filling his report with gratuitous, X-rated details about Clinton's intimate moments with Lewinsky, Starr appears to be following the same strategy as Jones's lawyers: shore up a questionable legal case with reams of graphic sexual material.

If studies of jury behavior are reliable, then the lurid details of the Starr report—the stain, the cigar, the phone sex—may paralyze the Presidency quite aside from the legal charges against him. Congress may find it difficult to resist the urge to condemn him as a bad person, even if there is no evidence that he has committed high crimes and misdemeanors. As opponents of the Molinari amendments tried to warn Clinton in 1994, it's hard to have a calm debate about legal guilt or innocence when you're distracted by lurid and graphic sexual information.

IT seems counterintuitive, on some level, not to let jurors consider evidence from a person's past which might shed light on his or her propensity to commit a particular crime. All of us make judgments about character every day, assuming that if someone is kind, say, in one situation he's likely to be kind in others. Psychologists call the tendency to generalize about a person's character on the basis of a few good deeds "the halo effect." And they cau-

"What a life should be—
well-written, fair-minded,
and spirited."*



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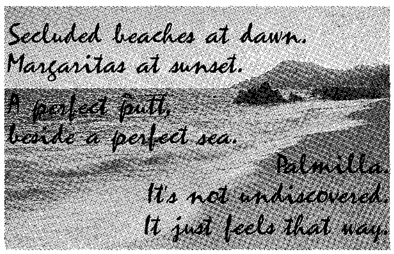

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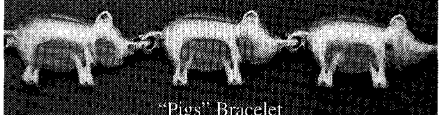

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tion that such character judgments can be unreliable. In 1968, a psychology professor named Walter Mischel, who is now a professor at Columbia, published an influential book called "Personality and Assessment," whose message, he told me recently, is that "it's extremely hazardous to generalize from behavior in one situation to behavior in other situations." Someone who is highly aggressive in the workplace, for example, could be exceptionally tender with his family. These days, Mischel advocates a contextual view of character, arguing that people may behave honestly at one time and dishonestly at another, because different situations may activate different abilities, feelings, and beliefs. "Someone who cheats on an arithmetic test might not cheat on a spelling test," he explains.

Mischel's findings bolster the traditional reluctance of English and American courts to allow prosecutors to present evidence that proves nothing but the defendant's bad character—precisely because such evidence can be so prejudicial. "The inquiry is not rejected because character is irrelevant," Justice Robert Jackson wrote in a Supreme Court case from 1948 involving a man who, the jury learned, had been arrested for receiving stolen goods some years before he was charged with bribing federal officials. "On the contrary, it is said to weigh too much with the jury and to so overpersuade them as to prejudge one with a bad general record and deny him a fair opportunity to defend against a particular charge."

Prurient information weighs more than most. Yet in sex cases courts have sometimes recognized exceptions to the general prohibition of character evidence. For example, English law at one time allowed prosecutors to introduce evidence of deviant sexual history to prove indecency charges. That is why, when Oscar Wilde was tried for committing indecent acts, a parade of his former lovers was called to the stand. Similarly, some American states at one time permitted evidence of past offenses to demonstrate a defendant's "lustful disposition" or "depraved sexual instinct" in certain sex-crime cases. But when Congress set out to codify federal rules of evidence, in the early seventies, it did not take that approach. Rule No. 404(a) says, "Evidence of a person's character or a trait of his character is not admissible for the purpose of proving that he acted in conformity therewith on a particular occasion."

Of course, past offenses can be, and often are, admitted to prove things other than bad character, such as motive or intent. Nevertheless, a disparity became apparent in sexual-assault trials. The sexual history of the accuser could be examined in order to cast light on the question of consent, yet the past behavior of the accused was generally off limits. Why was it relevant that she had a habit of wearing short skirts, feminists objected, and not that he had a habit of lunging at women who wore short skirts? In 1978, Congress adopted a rape-shield law, which protected an alleged victim from being grilled about her sex life. In 1994, this protection was extended to civil cases in which women charged sexual harassment. At the same time, feminists argued that it was unfair to exclude evidence of a man's sexual misdeeds, because a woman's version of what happened in private might not be believed unless her testimony could be corroborated by women who had suffered similar treatment. Persuaded by that argument, Clinton accepted the Molinari amendments in 1994, and thus completed a reversal of the traditional rules of evidence: now the sexual history of the accuser was more or less off limits, while that of the accused could be mined for damaging incidents.

The most prescient objections to the Molinari amendments came from Miguel Mendez, a law professor at Stanford. In comments submitted to the federal judicial conference charged with reviewing the new rules, Mendez cautioned that the halo effect has a troubling corollary, which he called "the devil's-horn effect." If jurors tend to expand a few bits of favorable information into a unified theory of someone's good character, they are even more likely to generalize from past crimes or offensive acts that someone is a bad person and to overlook any exculpatory information.

According to one of the best-known studies of jury verdicts, "The American Jury," published in 1966 by Harry Kalven, Jr., and Hans Zeisel, this effect is particularly dramatic in cases involving sexual behavior—which are precisely the cases affected by the Molinari rules. Kalven and Zeisel studied a series of

2 EGGS
• home fries
• buttered toast
• coffee, tea or ju.

"Ranch, creamy Italian, French, or global?"

trials in which defendants had engaged in sexual behavior that fell short of the legal definition of a particular crime. "In each of the cases," they concluded, "the jury is so outraged by the defendant's conduct that it overrides distinctions of the law and finds him guilty as charged."

William Miller, who teaches law at the University of Michigan and recently published a book called "The Anatomy of Disgust," gives another explanation for the devil's-horn effect. In forming mental pictures, "we often will use the synecdoche, the part for the whole," Miller told me. "Rather than remember the whole thing, we'll remember one salient feature. It's the way a lot of thought works." Bad thoughts tend to drive out good thoughts, and sexual thoughts tend to drive out all other thoughts entirely. The achievement of the Starr report, Miller argues, is to reduce Clinton to an image of nothing more than his grossest impulses. "Who can look at Clinton? All you think about is sexual organs," Miller says. "He is cancelled as a moral human being, as someone who needs to be deferred to. He becomes gross matter. There was always this hint about him, overeating, too much hair on his head, something about his fleshiness that made him look almost like a Vice in a medieval allegory play."

Miller's study of disgust also suggests that people are more likely to remember kinky sex acts than conventional ones, because unusual acts defy euphemism. "There are certain things that there are no decorous ways of talking about," Miller says. "That's what sank Clarence Thomas. A 'pubic hair' is the proper term. I think although we can turn a blow job into 'oral sex,' and make it go away, once a stain is there the very word 'stain' can't be euphemized. It's wet spots; it's *stains*. It's already irrevocably low and unsalvageable by euphemism." Perhaps for this reason, recent revelations of extramarital affairs by Representatives Dan Burton, Helen Chenoweth, and Henry Hyde didn't have the same resonance in the public mind. It's far easier to forget a sentence like "I fathered a child" than a sentence like "She also showed him an email describing the effect of chewing Altoid mints before performing oral sex."

"Republicans have old-fashioned extramarital affairs with other adults," the conservative pundit Bill Kristol told the Washington *Post* recently. The indiscretions of Burton and Chenoweth, he suggested, "really are moral lapses that are private, more easily forgiven and very different from taking advantage of a young person who works for you when you're President." The comment encapsulated the peculiar convergence of feminism and conservative moralism that is at the heart of the Clinton-Lewinsky affair. When Kate Millett published "Sexual Politics," in 1970, she infuriated conservatives with her insistence that the sexual realm should not be considered private or sacrosanct because sex inevitably reflects power relationships that need to be scrutinized and publicly debated. During the Clinton Administration, however, conservatives discovered that the feminist nostrum "The personal is political" coincided nicely with their own moralistic urge to judge the sexual probity of others. Once feminists had assured them that prurience could be justified in the service of sisterhood, Republicans were quick to breach the boundary between public and private with partisan relish.

The result is the ideological chaos of the past few months: family-values conservatives have clamored for the wide release of sexually graphic information about the President, while liberals have become apostles of restraint; Christian fundamentalists have taken up the cause of Paula Jones and Monica Lewinsky as working women, while some feminists have disavowed them; a former White House official charged Republicans with something "close to McCarthyism" (if you can follow this one) for demanding an F.B.I. investigation into the source of sexual revelations about members of Congress; and Kenneth Starr, of all people, has become a champion of women's rights. "To excuse a party who lied or concealed evidence on the ground that the evidence covered only 'personal' or 'private' behavior would frustrate the goals that Congress and the courts have sought to achieve in enacting and interpreting the Nation's sexual harassment laws," he wrote, in a prim defense of his decision to ferret out every last dirty detail.

Starr insists that he was upholding the rule of law when he decided to flood the country with lurid private information. But was he also preëmpting any chance for a reasoned public discourse about the President's behavior? "I don't think there is a standard or sane response to material of this kind," says the philosopher Thomas Nagel, who last month in the *Times Literary Supplement* wrote an eloquent defense of the old liberal notion that the personal should remain personal. By its very nature, explicit sexual material overwhelms all other arguments and ideas, which is why, Nagel says, "It's not inconsistent for the public to say 'I wish it would go away' and 'I wish it had never come up' but also to be unable to resist reading about it and allowing it to crowd everything else out." A Time/CNN poll taken as the House debated whether or not to release further details of the affair confirmed Nagel's argument: close to seventy per cent of respondents opposed making the videotape of Clinton's testimony public, yet nearly fifty per cent said that they would probably view the material if it were available.

Clinton's adversaries are clearly counting on the irresistible appeal of prurience. John Whitehead, the president of the Rutherford Institute, which has been paying Paula Jones's legal expenses, believes that Starr's report may sway the judges in the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals who will consider Jones's appeal. The relevance to the Jones case of Clinton's consensual sexual contact with Lewinsky, and his subsequent statements about it, remains legally tenuous. But, "with all this stuff coming up, the judges are going to look at it with a much more scrutinizing eye," Whitehead says. "I think that naturally affects how judges rule, the whole psychosocial thing."

Whitehead himself is something of a psychosocial enigma. He is a born-again Christian who admires the Sex Pistols and adorns his office with autographed posters of work by the feminist artist Judy Chicago, which features female genitalia and ovaries served up on dinner plates. He professes to be an admirer of Catharine MacKinnon, the pioneer of sexual-harassment law, who has questioned the possibility of meaningful consent in cases of sex between people of unequal power. "That's the connection between Lewinsky and Jones," Whitehead told me. "Clinton's taking advantage of people."

Yet it is difficult to regard Monica Lewinsky as a helpless victim after reading the Starr report. The indelible images of her throwing a tantrum at the White House gate and grabbing the President's crotch on a rope line overshadow the report's stern conclusion that the President's actions amount to "sexual relations in the workplace between a high official and a young subordinate employee." The effect of Starr's decision to describe the intern's behavior as clinically as possible is to affix the devil's horns to Lewinsky as well, and to discredit her as a sympathetic figure.

All this leaves feminists in an exquisite bind: the legal reforms they argued for have been deployed against a President who supports their cause, in a case that many believe trivializes sexual-harassment law. Deborah Rhode, who has spent her career arguing for the expansion of the rights of women in harassment and rape cases, must now try to limit the damage to women when those rights are exercised against a Democratic President. In 1988, Rhode published an essay called "Moral Character: The Personal and the Political." Writing in the wake of the Gary Hart affair, she began by lamenting the costs of intrusive inquiries into the moral failings of politicians. But she went on to say that evidence of Hart's womanizing was relevant to his candidacy, because the underlying conduct, and the way Hart responded to the charges, raised questions about his judgment. "A habitual weakness for casual affairs is not like a weakness for chocolate," Rhode wrote. "Womanizing degrades and objectifies women in general and can be hurtful and humiliating to one woman in particular. . . . For positions involving moral leadership, these questions are relevant."

But this year, writing in the *National Law Journal* about feminism and the Clinton question, Rhode argued, "Feminists who have reserved judgment on Mr. Clinton's conduct are by no means applying a politically motivated double standard for harassers. Monica Lewinsky's allegations, even if true, do not establish harassment of the kind that sparked opposition to Justice Clarence Thomas. Whatever sexual advances Ms. Lewinsky received were, by her own account, not unwelcome." But Paula Jones insists that Governor Clinton's advances to her were very unwelcome indeed—and Jones then set out to find women who could corroborate her experience.

Now we are confronted with the graphic results of that search: wave after wave of explicit emotional and anatomical details about the ten hours or so Clinton and Lewinsky spent together. First came the leaks. Then the report and the footnotes, followed by the President's videotaped deposition and some twenty-eight hundred pages of unexpurgated evidence, not to mention the forced sexual confessions of assorted congressmen. In the end, the public's response to all this is hard to predict—and that was precisely the point of those who opposed the Molinari rules. Graphic sexual material can make people angry and irrational. They may end up with a negative view not only of Clinton, but also of Lewinsky, of Starr, of Congress, of the press, and of government in general, which has dangerously exceeded its proper bounds by allowing the public sphere to overwhelm the private.

"Both the material itself and everybody's response to it are highly personal," says Thomas Nagel. "So it's simply inappropriate to try to introduce those responses into a public forum where agreement is the point." Trying to force a collective judgment on an individual's most intimate thoughts and behavior is, in his view, "totalitarian." Although it may be too late, Congress should try to restore the frayed boundaries between sex and politics, not for Bill Clinton's sake, but for ours. ◆

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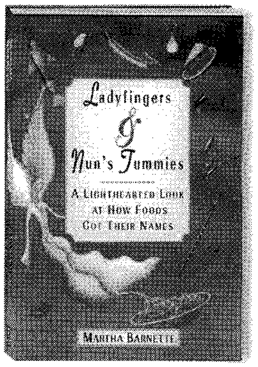
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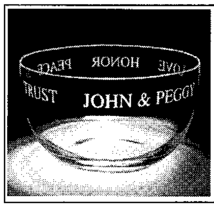

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A CRITIC AT LARGE

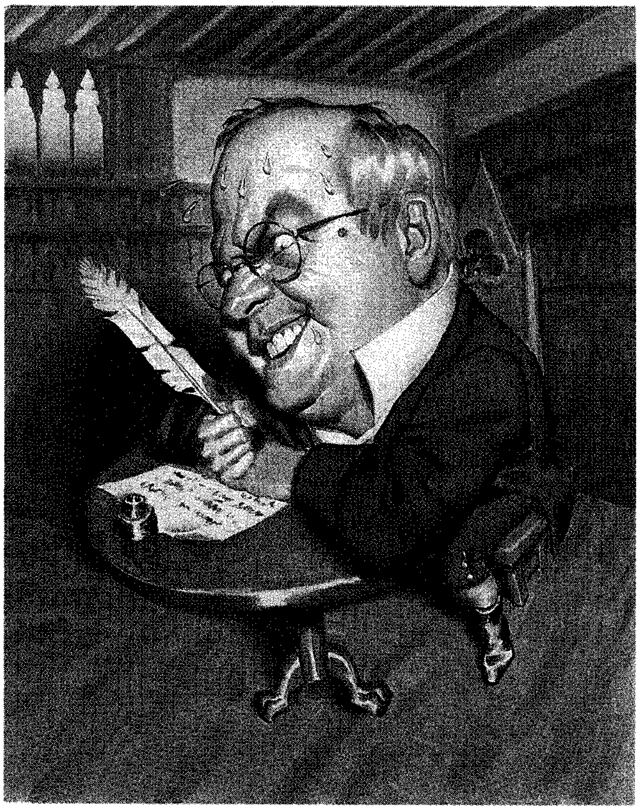
AMERICAN STUDIES

The Kenneth Starr report proudly calls itself a narrative. But, as in many literary works, the characters got away from the author.

BY ADAM GOPNIK

WHAT is this thing called "The Report"? A four-hundred-and-forty-five-page book, among other things, a story to read and criticize—a "narrative," as its authors proudly call it. What happens if we try approaching it that way? After all, no one has had much success dealing with it as a judicial or a legal document—since judiciousness is a quality it so obviously lacks, and it is directed to no court of law. Nor can it be read as journalism, a reluctantly arrived-at exposé: its elaborations are far too ornate, its attention far too riveted. An indictment? But its manifest content—a man had sex with a woman not his wife, and then said that he hadn't—could be summed up in a sentence. In fact, the unnamed authors provide us with exactly that sentence in their opening pages, as though to show how duller hands might have done it: "Ms. Lewinsky contradicts the President on a key issue. According to Ms. Lewinsky, the President touched her breasts and genitalia—which means that his conduct met the Jones definition of sexual relations even under his theory." Footnotes; appendix; end of story.

So why all the schmutz? Well, Ken Starr and his crew are *writing*, God help them—they're trying to dramatize a relationship, depict a mood, evoke a moral atmosphere. Think of "The Report" as a love child of the novel—as what the quarterlies call a text—and maybe that gets you closer to its purpose and to the undeniable spell it casts. Its authors are stirred by something, and the thing that stirs them can be grasped only in its monstrous entirety as a story, with details right down to plaster casts of the hero's and the heroine's parts. This explains why there are more gratuitous insertions in "The Report" than there ever were in the Oval Office: the oral-anal encounters are "saved" for the footnotes, lest readers become bored, and sentences are repeated for dramatic effect. "Again, he stopped her before he ejaculated" and "The President had phone sex" and "Mrs. Clinton was in . . ." (Athens, Ireland, Denver, Bolivia) are the favorite three. The laboriously recounted instances of near-ejaculation, the orgasms achieved and enumerated—it's all there for the reviewers.



The poison pen: In his report, Starr recaptures the original novelistic formula—pornography for Puritans.

DANIEL ADEL

You can almost read it as a novel in the classic tradition. When Richard Nixon got into trouble, the cliché was that there was something Shakespearean about his crisis, and his fall, if it lacked Shakespearean poetry, had a Shakespearean subject: the slow declension of ambition into crime, and of crime into evil. But nobody would call Clinton's troubles Shakespearean; they're more bourgeois than that. There's something vaguely eighteenth century about them. It's there in the constant references to a higher piety that nobody believes in, and Monica gives new life to the word "wench." Not since Richardson's "Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded," one of the first novels, has so much ink been spilled on a pas de deux between a guy who owns a big manor house and the girl who works there, with the difference that this girl, unlike that one, succumbs. (So, "Monica; or, Sin Punished.") Even the special achievement, in Starr's report, of what Sean Wilentz has accurately called "pornography for puritans" recalls the original novelistic formula: pornography for Puritans is exactly what novels were accused of being. And, in the spirit of "Tom Jones," the first great novel, "The Report" is a text that ultimately, though against its will, makes a favorite moral point of the English novel: in a narrative of the ins and outs of bourgeois love, a scapegrace hero is always more appealing than a moralizing narrator. "The Report" is a classic story about adultery, in which the law and human affection are in tension, and it resolves in the usual way. When there's a choice between law and sympathy, the law may take the lovers but the lovers take the cake.

"The Report" arrives at this message in an oddly elliptical yet recognizably American manner. Like such other long-awaited works as Harold Brodkey's "Party of Animals" (not such a bad title for this book, either) and Truman Capote's "Answered Prayers" (the G.O.P. perspective) and Joe Gould's "Oral History of Our Time" (oh, gee), it is a book that promised to be vast, encyclopedic, and overseeing, and turned out to be narrow, claustrophobic, and obsessive. What we had been promised—and what the authors received a forty-million-dollar advance to deliver—was a work in the spirit of DeLillo or Ellroy, or even Melville: an epic study in evil and its pursuit, sweeping from Little Rock to Washington and back again in waves of bad faith and intricate deceit. That book, however, has quietly been allowed to disappear, and the book that we have been given turns out to be the endlessly reiterated account of a few personal interludes. Maybe American classics are just like that.

It is American, too, in regarding a banal bourgeois theme with a rising sense of horror. Like Poe far more than like Melville, this text—whose tone recalls "The Tell-Tale Heart" (the throbbing organ that keeps the narrator uneasily awake) and "The Cask of Amontillado" (all those windowless rooms!)—uses an obsessional voice to tell what is, in all other ways, a relentlessly ordinary story of adultery. A supposedly dispassionate account of a man's sins becomes so overwrought that the reader gradually realizes that the point of the story is not that the hero is wicked but that the narrator is mad.

SAINT-LIEUX, 1939

The smell of disinfectant grips your throat
when you come near the toilets
They form one border of the schoolyard, the other
is the compost heap, springboard
where we inevitably perch
on the spurs of our wooden clogs
young fowl avid
not for grain
but for our game's immaterial substance
Like this, poverty passes, with a queen's disdain
through a pure universe

We aren't really poor
but lack the niceties of life
clothed in shapeless sweaters, woollen stockings, thick mufflers
feet in our one pair of clogs
I was a queen one day at dusk
astride my father's shoulders
when we went to collect my new pair
In winter we take into our cold beds
a brick heated in the kitchen stove
swaddled in newspaper
My feet slide like a water fowl's
on a lake's surface from which impalpably rises
volcanic heat

—Claire Malroux

(*Translated, from the French, by Marilyn Hacker.*)

"THE REPORT" tells how a middle-aged politician (if this were a novel, its one flaw would be that the authors rather trashily make him the President) with a bad case of arrested development gets involved with a young woman. At first, he exploits her, almost brutally, and then—tentatively, sporadically—comes to treat her marginally but crucially better. Yet "The Report" also tells the story of how the same man, doing exactly the same things in the same order, descends into criminality. This double movement is what makes the work so compelling.

When we meet the hero and the heroine, what surprises us is not that, with Josephine Hart-like speed, the hero succumbs to the temptation of a zaftig Jewish girl in thong underpants—surely as familiar a literary temptation as you could hope to find—but that he proceeds to treat her so piggishly. ("While the President was on the telephone . . . 'he unzipped his pants and exposed himself,' and she performed oral sex.") This treatment leaves her hurt and confused. She wants to be recognized as a person, not just as a sexual object.

The form that her demand for authentic personhood takes is the wish to be allowed to "complete" an act of oral sex: "I told him that I wanted . . . to complete that. And he said . . . that he needed to wait until he trusted me more." This demand is at first as puzzling to the hero as it is to the reader. But the debate over "completion" tenderly outlines, as a novel should, a fine and otherwise easily missed distinction in American mores. The two principals are not, as their critics insist, children of the sexual revolution; rather, they stand on either side of it, semaphoring with their bodies across a divide of incomprehension.

The hero, far from being a sixties free-love-in-Yasgur's-mud kind of guy, is still a saxophone-playing, short-haired smoothie—a fifties guy (the fifties lasted until 1963) and a Southern fifties guy, with a Southern boy's elaborate etiquette of where you can put what when, for how long, and with what meaning. When he says that he didn't think of it as sex, he is simply giving us the time-honored weaseling of smart Southern boys in the back seats of cars circa 1963 ("I know, darlin', I know. But, see, darlin', it isn't sex if I just . . .").

On the far side of the sexual revolution, where the heroine has spent her life, oral sex is as banal as kissing; the sign of maturity, adulthood, commitment, respect, and confidence is to be ready to complete it. The ultimate sign of sexual contempt in 1963 has become the ultimate sign of sexual trust in 1998. (A weird point for the social historians, and not one that we would have looked to Ken Starr to clear up; but, there, he has.)

IT has become commonplace for journalists to say that the sex in "The Report" is "sordid" or "disgusting" or "squalid." (American journalists, of course, lead especially protected lives, in which furtive office couplings are not merely unknown but cause for in-

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stant anathema. That cloistered existence is what gives indignant newspaper editorials their charm, like the cheese produced by monks.) But, really, it's just sex. Starr has obviously caught on to Swift's discovery that everything mammals do can be made to sound obscene if you write it down flatly enough. Only on reflection does it occur to the reader that, for all the narrator's shock, this rhythm—animal encounters passing drowsily into semi-affectionate banter—sounds like . . . well, like sex.

Yet if the sex stays about the same (and there really isn't much of it; ten encounters in two years is not so hot), our hero's behavior improves. There's a touching, subtly presented moment in the text where the improvement seems most evident:

> Ms. Lewinsky testified that on Friday, March 29, 1996, she was walking down a hallway when she passed the President, who was wearing the first necktie she had given him. She asked where he had gotten the tie, and he replied: "Some girl with style gave it to me."

Not Cary Grant, perhaps, but not Tommy Lee, either—a decent attempt to reconcile sinful desire with human recognition. Even the compulsive gift-giving that united these two American shoppers is neither brutal nor caddish, not even when it includes "Oy Vey! The Things They Say!: A Book of Jewish Wit." Is there a lovelier, sadder sentence in American writing than "Many of the 30 or so gifts that she gave the President reflected his interests in history, antiques, cigars, and frogs"? This amateur of plaster amphibians even attempts to cut off the affair, announcing that he's doing wrong. Far from being out of control—conforming to the formula "Lost to all shame, they recklessly . . . "—he was haunted by shame, or the possibility of it, at every step. This wasn't a man indulging in dreams of omnipotence; it was a man who had a thing for a girl in the office and succumbed to it.

Here is where the narrator begins to move at cross-purposes to the reader. You would think that the voice might increase in warmth or in grudging fairness as the relationship develops—that his goal would be to prove that the sexual relations were selfish and exploitative, and that reluctantly he would have to admit that this was not entirely so. Yet, bizarrely, what offends this narrator is that the sexual relations did become reciprocal and engaged—that the hero aroused the heroine as much as she aroused him, that he touched and caressed and praised and eventually gave her pleasure, several pleasures. For, as the hero becomes more sympathetic as a human being—less contemptuous, more remorseful about his own behavior, more generous in his sexuality—he also (according to the narrator) incriminates himself ever deeper. ("Whereas the President testified that 'what began as a friendship came to include [intimate contact],' Ms. Lewinsky explained that the relationship moved in the opposite direction.") This is because the narrator is obsessed by a luridly abstract document—a definition of sexual acts—drawn up by the hero's enemies, which in effect criminalizes any reciprocal acts.

The crisis comes when the hero finally does what the heroine wants. At her urging, he completes the act and leaves the traces on her dress. The very moment when he gives the girl the sign of authentic feeling that she has demanded (his semen: an odd sign, perhaps, but these are odd times) is the moment when he incriminates himself finally and permanently. The selfish acts are the safe ones; the reciprocal acts are criminal. Just as the reader sighs with relief, the narrator claps on the cuffs.

The book's epilogue becomes increasingly frantic. The narrator's voice intrudes, postmodernly, insisting that the hero is guilty because of his unwillingness to coöperate in the creation of the text. In a strange way, the narrator begins to compete with the disappointed lover. He, we realize—another postmodern touch—has taken her voice: "This office extended six separate invitations to the President to testify." Why won't you respond to my requests? Why won't you return my phone calls? You do everything you can to avoid me. And, finally: I will *not* be ignored. The plaint of the rejected mistress has become the cry of the rejected disciplinarian (Clinton "spurned six invitations to testify"). Hell, our chagrined hero learns, hath no fury like a woman scorned ("You want me out of your life. . . . I guess the signs have been made clear for awhile—not wanting to see me and rarely calling"), except that of an independent counsel spurned.

WHAT we have, in other words, is a classic novelistic confrontation between a sinner and his pursuer, with the usual novelistic moral: given a choice between human sin and abstract justice, our hearts go to the sinner. This doesn't mean that we don't want the sinner, whether Hester, Lady Glencora, or Dagon, to be punished—"censure" is a very good word for what we do want—but we also want him (or her) to be made safe from the pursuing narrator. People seem to be trying to parse "The Report" from scratch, as though its subject were entirely new. But there is a whole literature devoted to the question of adultery, transgression, and the law, and that literature is called "literature." It has what are called "points" and "morals," and first among them is to be extremely suspicious of anyone who tries to compress the erotic life into overly pointed morals. Novels have always been inhospitable to people who make too much of the law—think of the beadles and lawyers in Dickens—precisely because a good narrative gives us such a complicated view of human motives and their mixture that we are rightly suspicious of anyone who tries to apply a rule book to that plurality.

The curious thing is that America is the one country whose law once tried to mimic the principle of literature. "We are a nation of laws," we say. But all nations are nations of law. France is a nation of laws, one for every person. Ancient Babylon was a nation of laws. Eighteenth-century England was a nation of so many laws that there were more than two hundred separate hanging offenses. What we are, perhaps distinctively, is a nation where law is "essentially contested" in terms of rights, including the right to touch an inner thigh and say it was an outer. Our law, in Auden's phrase, is like love, or tries to be.

This is the lesson that the best American narratives are there to teach us. It is why Huck Finn tears up the lawful bit of paper turning in Jim the runaway slave, and why Hawthorne thought it was better to wear a scarlet letter than to hand one out. We are grateful to the authors of "The Report" for reminding us of this vital literary lesson, and now let us hear no more from them. They can only dilute the effect, as authors have been known to do, by writing a sequel. ♦

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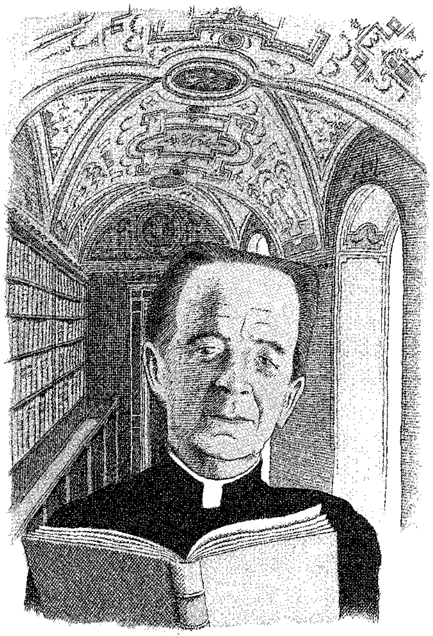
LETTER FROM VATICAN CITY

LIBRARY PRIVILEGES

The scholarly priest who tried to make the Church's treasured collection accessible to all lost his job because of questionable business deals.

BY ALEXANDER STILLE

THE Vatican Library sits in the heart of the Vatican—well inside its fortresslike brick walls, constructed in the fifteenth century. To reach the library, one must pass through the Porta di Sant'Anna, a large black-and-gold cast-iron gate next to St. Peter's Square, and proceed, along sidewalks thick with priests, nuns, bishops, and cardinals, to the Cortile del Belvedere, an interior courtyard designed by the great Renaissance architect Bramante. In the early sixteenth century, Pope Paul III, who ruled St. Peter's with the pomp and extravagance of a temporal prince, held feasts in this courtyard and staged mock naval battles, just as the rulers of Rome had done in the Colosseum. A disapproving successor, Sixtus V, put an end to these unholy practices in the fifteen-eighties by erecting the library building right in the middle of the courtyard, which is now used mainly as a parking lot. Thus the library, from its inception, has been caught between the Vatican's warring religious and secular impulses.



Father Boyle, a respected medievalist, tried to bring the library into the digital age.

PIERRE LE-TAN

The library's collection was officially started in 1451 by Pope Nicholas V, a humanist who believed that reviving classical antiquity would usher in a new golden age. With a thirst for learning that bordered on rapacity, he and succeeding Popes sent their emissaries throughout Europe, to North Africa, and to the Middle East to buy, copy, or even steal manuscripts that had survived the Dark Ages. Over time, however, the expansive spirit of the Renaissance—Nicholas V had declared that the library should be for the "convenience of the learned"—gave way to a darker Counter-Reformation attitude, which held that knowledge was something to be jealously guarded and meted out to a select few, rather than disseminated as widely as possible. An eighteenth-century Spanish priest who visited the library described his frustration at being able to get only a tantalizing glimpse of its riches: visible in a few glass cases were manuscripts of Virgil's Aeneid, and of Plutarch, Seneca, and the Roman playwright Terence. But hidden under lock and key were hundreds of thousands of other treasures, including many founding documents of world civilization: Egyptian papyri, Greek mathematical treatises, the astronomical observations of Galileo, and Mayan codices sent to Rome by missionaries, along with miles of rare manuscripts in Persian, Coptic, Ethiopian, Hebrew, Arabic, Chinese, and Japanese. Because "a silly policy keeps this wonderfully rich library jealously locked up," the priest, Juan Andres, wrote in 1785, he judged the Vatican collection "a cemetery of books, not a library."

Although the library was reopened to scholars in 1883 and underwent modernization earlier in this century, something of its cloistered, inquisitorial atmosphere persisted until 1984, when

"That's Norman. He was badly miscast as my husband."

Father Leonard Boyle, a highly learned, charming Irish Dominican priest, was appointed its prefect. Short and delicately built, with jet-black hair and pale skin, Boyle generally has a playful, ironic glint in his eye and a sharp tongue that seems always ready with a joke, which he delivers in his distinct Irish brogue. A renowned scholar of medieval Latin texts, he appeared to exemplify a new breed of twenty-first-century humanist, equally at home deciphering the monastic script of a tenth-century manuscript and talking about bits and pixels with a computer engineer. Boyle firmly believed that the Vatican collection should function as "a library, not a museum." He computerized the library's card catalogue and rewired the main reading room for laptops. He hired women for the first time, relaxed the dress code, and refurbished the café, where conversations held over cappuccino and sandwiches could span two millennia, with modern scholars remarking on how the Renaissance humanists had collected or copied the world's ancient texts. "Father Boyle's Vatican Library reminded me of Raphael's 'School of Athens,'" said one scholar, referring to the famous fresco, which depicts Plato and Aristotle, the Arab scholar Averroës, and Michelangelo in conversation together.

When I first met Boyle, in 1995, he received me in the Vatican Library in a wood-panelled office, with a crucifix on the wall behind him and a photograph of the Pope opposite. On a laptop computer, he and an I.B.M. executive showed me the prototype for his next bold modernization—a CD-ROM to lead you on a virtual tour of the library and its contents. This was part of a much larger and more ambitious joint venture, with I.B.M., to digitize every page of the Vatican's hundred and fifty thousand rare manuscripts, so that the entire collection could be accessed at computer terminals from Argentina to Beijing. "In using electronic media," Boyle has said, "we are just being our age, just as Nicholas V was, carrying on the tradition of the library as a library of the human spirit."

As I was preparing to return to Rome last summer to write an account of Boyle and the marriage of ancient culture and modern technology, however, I learned that he had been unceremoniously sacked. One day in early May, the studious calm of the library was broken by the arrival of the Vatican police. They sealed off the café, the I.B.M. office, and two souvenir shops near the Sistine Chapel. Employees were escorted off the premises as if they were criminals. Father Boyle was out of the country, at a scholarly conference, but when he returned, the curt announcement of a new prefect appeared in *L'Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican newspaper. Having set out to describe Boyle's bold leadership of the library, I ended up investigating its unravelling.

The Vatican is an institution that prefers to deal with scandal discreetly and is generally indulgent toward those who stray. When Archbishop Marcinkus, the head of the Vatican bank, was implicated in a major financial scandal, the Vatican protected him, and paid out hundreds of millions of dollars. For the Vatican hierarchy to be so heavy-handed with Father Boyle, a man who had devoted his entire life to scholarship and the Church, was highly unusual and invited interpretation. After all, Father Boyle was close to retirement age and, presumably, could have been eased out gently. Someone evidently wanted to discredit him, and in a highly public fashion.

Since then, the scholarly community in Rome has been buzzing with conspiracy theories. According to one scenario, Church conservatives sought to prevent Father Boyle—a highly independent man and a suspected "liberal"—from possibly ascending to the College of Cardinals that would elect the next Pope. Five of seven former library prefects had been elevated to cardinal, and, with Pope John Paul II now barely able to walk unassisted, many saw Boyle's ouster as a bit of political jockeying in anticipation of the next conclave. Boyle dismissed this theory. "I never wanted to become a cardinal," he told me. He had joked, "I'm not interested in some second-rate job—the Papacy or nothing!"

In any event, it is clear that Boyle's effort to make the library more accessible had its costs: pages from a precious illuminated manuscript turned up on the American art market in 1995, apparently having been stolen by a scholar whom Boyle had allowed to be left alone with them. Boyle's open style also earned him powerful enemies within the ecclesiastical hierarchy. For example, some members of the College of Cardinals opposed a project of his to put seventy-five thousand images from the Vatican Library on optical disk. And Boyle had once questioned an order from the Holy Father to give the President of Mexico a precious Aztec-era manuscript. Boyle had also refused the Vatican Secretariat of State's request that he ban from the library a scholar who had published a book that embarrassed the Holy See. "Boyle is being punished for doing what none of his predecessors managed," one priest-scholar at the Vatican speculates. "Making the library work."

The actual reasons for Boyle's firing, however, turn out to be considerably more complex. In order to finance his ambitious modernization program, he made some very questionable business deals, which landed the Vatican in a terrible legal tangle. In particular, in 1988, he assigned exclusive worldwide rights to the images in the library to a California businesswoman named Elaine Peconi (then Iannessa; she remarried in 1995), who planned to license an array of books, jewelry, clothing, souvenirs, films, and CD-ROMs. Boyle did not know that she had recently filed for bankruptcy, or that an investor she brought into the project had owned a failed savings and loan. Eventually, the whole matter wound up in court in California; after six years of litigation, the Vatican settled the case for $8.8 million, and was also hit with $1.3 million in attorneys' fees.

Yet, in an odd way, Boyle's business blunders were perfectly in keeping with the culture of the Holy See. "The Vatican is like a very complex provincial court of the eighteenth century, which is highly informal in its handling of its money," a scholar who has acted as a consultant at the Vatican for many years told me. Traditionally, the Vatican has been profoundly distrustful of the world of big business, and still prefers to deal with individuals rather than with large corporations. For example, Boyle, fearing potentially embarrassing associations with controversial recording artists, turned down a possible deal with CBS, but signed a contract with a little-known businessman without even receiving a résumé. "It's the old problem of trying to serve both Christ and Mammon," one experienced Vatican official said. "Our fundamental mission is religious, but we have economic needs, like any other institution. We're better at the first than the latter." Then, too, he went on to say, "There is a principle here: sometimes it is easier to ask forgiveness for something that is already done than to ask permission." In other words, given the conservative and slow-moving Vatican bureaucracy, Boyle may have felt that the only way he could modernize the library was to cut his own deals.

Because of the Vatican collection's centrality to world culture, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace offered to undertake an ambitious cataloguing project at the Vatican in the nineteen-twenties and thirties. A million and a half printed books were catalogued, and a modern conservation laboratory was set up, but to this day the only listings for tens of thousands of manuscripts are handwritten notations in Latin, Italian, and French. And since the collection grew in the course of centuries by subsuming numerous other libraries—of queens, princes, cardinals, and Popes—many documents are still listed as parts of these different collections. One therefore needs to know a considerable amount about the history of the Papacy to find what one is looking for. Innumerable items remain noted only in the sketchiest form, their contents virtually unknown. This situation has led to endless conjecture, rumor, and legend as to the Vatican collection. Many Jewish scholars suspect that countless Hebrew texts, supposedly burned during the Inquisition, lie secreted among its labyrinthine shelves. There is also a widely held belief (probably erroneous) that the Vatican possesses one of the world's richest collections of pornography.

While the free-spending Popes of the Renaissance spared no expense when it came to building up the collection, the

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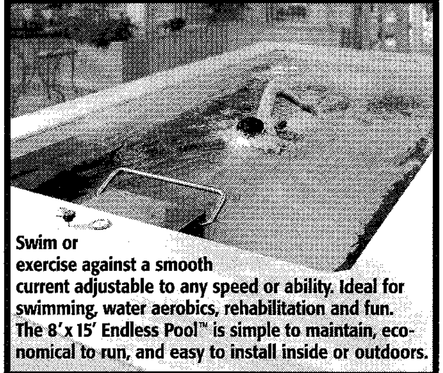

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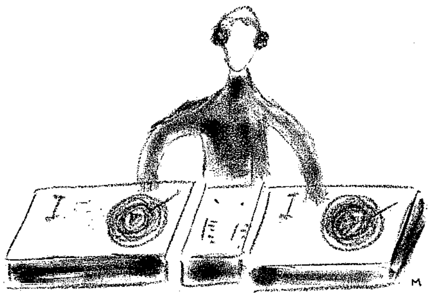
current Vatican, understandably, feels the need to concentrate on its religious mandate. "There is no money for culture," Cardinal Alfons Stickler, who was Boyle's predecessor as prefect, laments. These days, the Vatican pays the salaries of eighty library employees who stack books, write catalogues, work in the preservation and photographic laboratories, and run a small publishing department. The library's main discretionary funds are roughly five hundred thousand dollars earned each year from selling postcards and catalogues and charging scholars for photographs, photocopies, and microfilm. This tiny amount must cover all new acquisitions of books and periodicals, office supplies, and capital improvements.

In 1981, Stickler was able to raise enough money to build temperature-controlled stacks for the manuscript collection by making a commercial arrangement with the German publishing company Belser, which acquired the rights to produce expensive facsimile editions of eighty Vatican manuscripts. The German Council of Bishops put up four million dollars for the improvements, agreeing to be repaid from the proceeds of Belser's book sales. When sales did not go as planned, Belser declared bankruptcy, and the bishops had to absorb a considerable loss. Stickler, however, emerged unscathed. "I had the German bishops do all of the financial arrangements," he explained to me, and then made the gesture of wiping his hands. Observing this shrewd pantomime, I understood why Stickler was in a purple cardinal's robe, receiving me in a vast, well-appointed apartment on St. Peter's Square, while Father Boyle was living at the Church of San Clemente, near the Colosseum, wearing the same threadbare clothes I had seen him in years earlier.

Boyle's home is a metaphor for the cultural continuity of Rome. The church one enters at ground level dates from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance; its lowest level consists of both the remains of a clandestine Christian church from the first century A.D. and a Mithraeum—a place of worship of the oriental cult of Mithras, which was popular in pagan Rome. One day, when Boyle was doing archeological work at the church, he uncovered an ancient Roman mosaic. That evening, an older Dominican took him to task for digging up the floor, telling him he should have left it for posterity. To which Boyle replied, "But aren't we also posterity?"

When I returned to San Clemente to interview Father Boyle last summer, a few months after his firing, he had lost fifteen or twenty pounds from his already slight frame and appeared to have aged ten years. But he still had the same colorful, down-to-earth manner and irreverent sense of humor. Born in Donegal, Ireland, in 1923, Boyle was first educated in Gaelic and has always remained close to his working-class Irish roots. He also has impeccable academic credentials, which had made him a natural choice as prefect: he had distinguished himself as a medievalist at Oxford, where he discovered his passion for Latin paleography—the art of deciphering medieval manuscripts—and between 1956 and 1984, he had taught paleography in Rome and Toronto, published numerous books and articles, and come to know the Vatican collections as well as anyone alive.

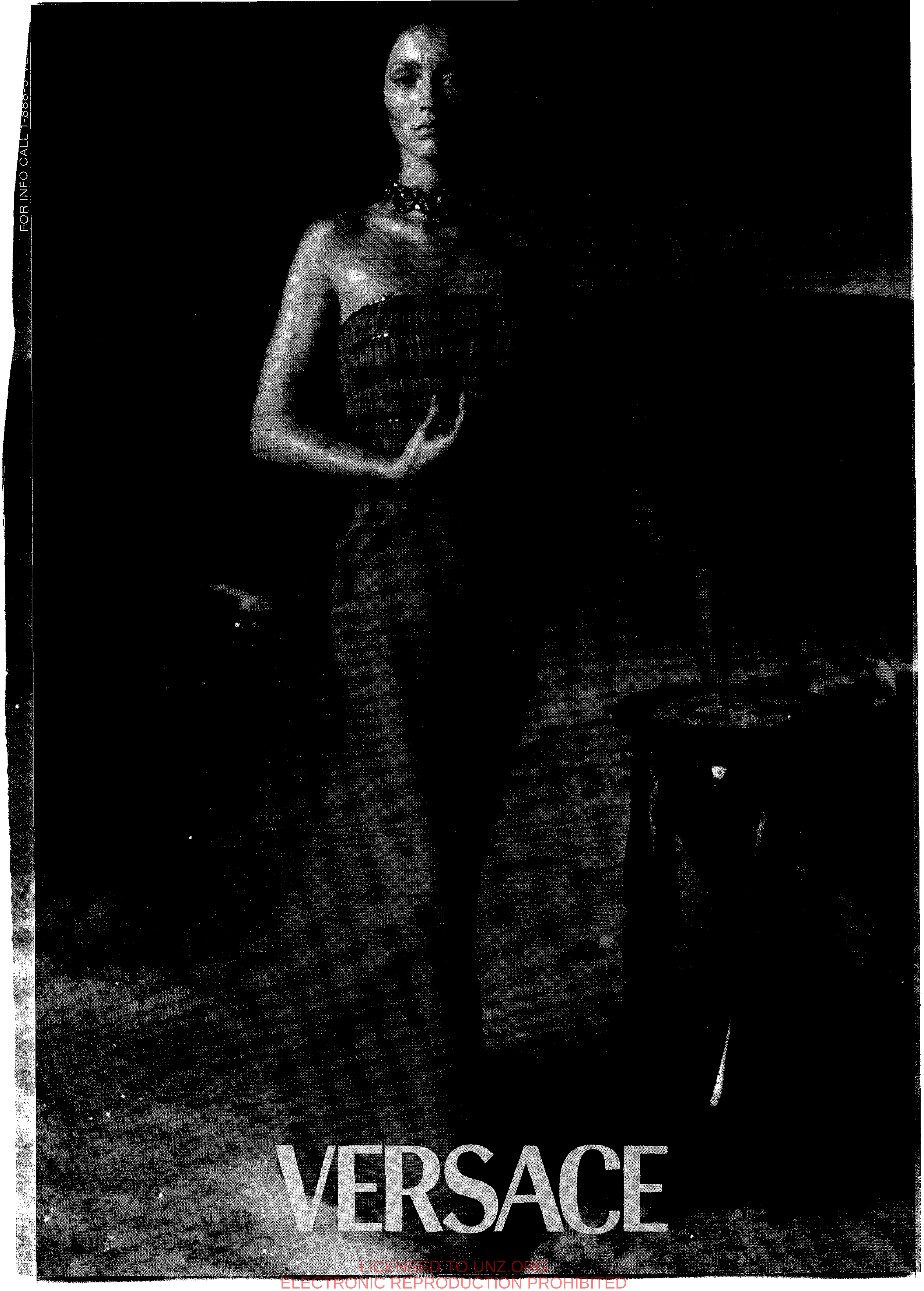
Indeed, Father Boyle had become something of a legend in the scholarly community. He worked like a detective, treating every tiny detail of an ancient text—the script and abbreviations used by the copyist, the materials and the condition of the document—as a clue to its history. He reconstructed the often adventurous lives of early books—they sometimes travelled from one end of Europe to the other, surviving exile, war, and theological disputes—and found that their peregrinations revealed the intellectual and cultural currents of medieval Europe. His trained eye could discern the zeal, the loving attention, the distraction, or the growing fatigue of a scribe. In one case, as he traced an increasingly uncertain hand coming to an abrupt halt, he concluded that the writer had probably died in midsentence.



While Father Boyle has received most of the blame for the library's legal problems, it was, in fact, Cardinal Stickler who first introduced him to the California businesswoman Elaine Peconi and encouraged him to make the deal that proved his undoing. Peconi had previously sold television advertising and run a public-relations firm in the Los Angeles area. Everything about her is larger than life: a statuesque woman of sixty with a helmet of gray-blond hair, bright blue eyes, and a loud, strident voice, she resembles the heroine in a Wagner opera, though she generally wears a sweatsuit and jogging shoes. She speaks in long arias, moving from peals of laughter to thunderclaps of anger. She and her husband live alone on a ranch with two large houses in the San Bernardino Mountains, two hours east of Los Angeles. Peconi is a woman of great energy and optimism who has a grandiose vision of the world. She initially projected that the Vatican Library licenses would earn a hundred million dollars in profits each year, and she still insists that her business is worth a quarter of a billion dollars.

Peconi's family had many ties to the Catholic Church, and she was able to arrange some meetings with people at the Vatican in 1987. Her original idea had been to market dolls based on objects in the Vatican collection; knowing almost nothing about its contents, she first approached the Vatican Museum, but it rejected her proposal. She got a much more positive reception from Cardinal Stickler, who, after leaving the job as prefect of the library, had been made Cardinal Librarian. Peconi says Cardinal Stickler told her that when he took over the Vatican Library he had a conversation with a high-level Vatican official who told him, "Go out and find the money and I will absolve you of everything."

Cardinal Stickler told me that he recalls meeting Peconi but doesn't remember much about their conversation. "I have several letters from this man who now claims to barely know me," Peconi declares indignantly. Indeed, when I visited her, in California, she showed me several long letters from Cardinal Stickler, which had a warm, personal tone. Most important, she has one from 1988, which is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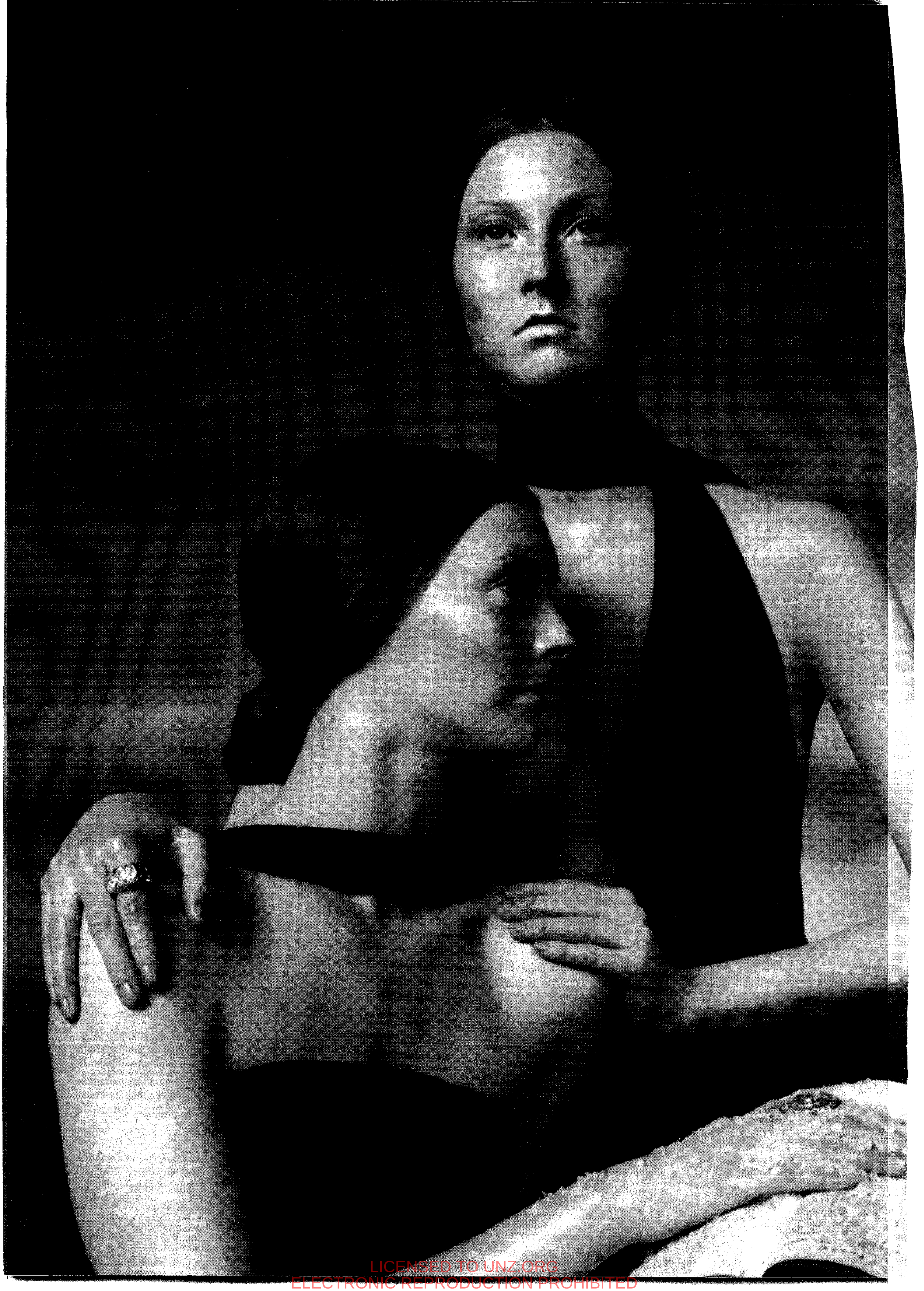

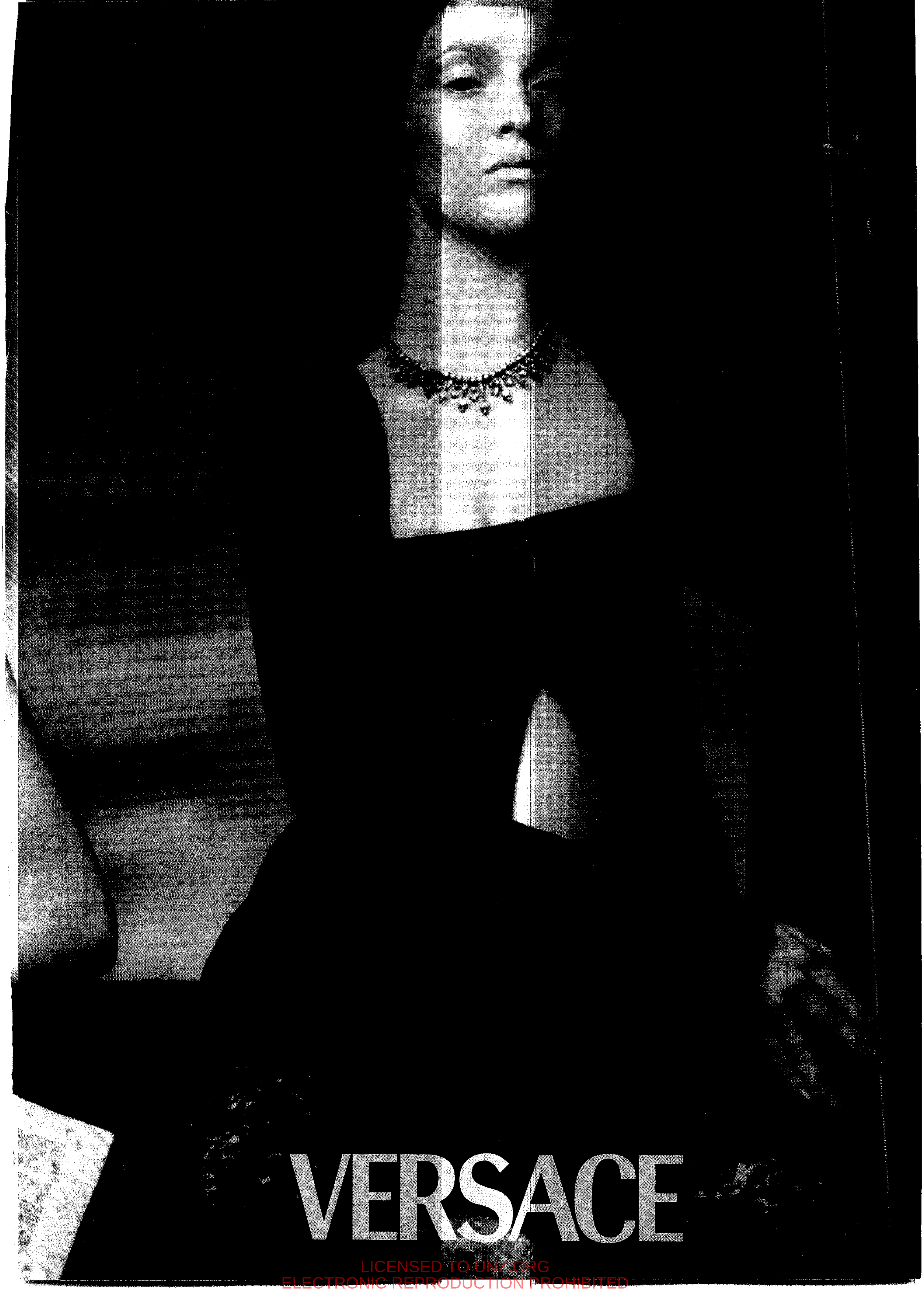
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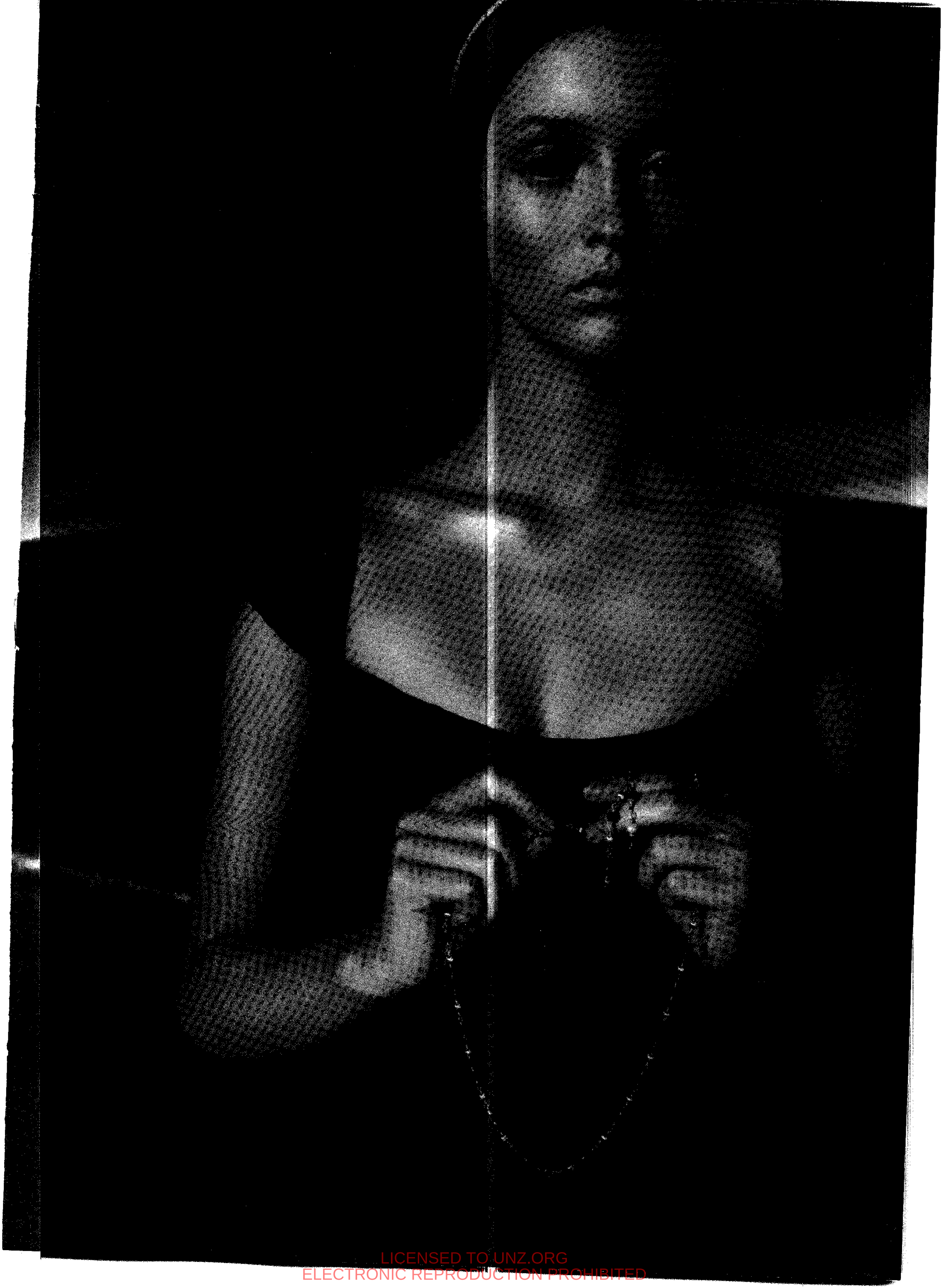

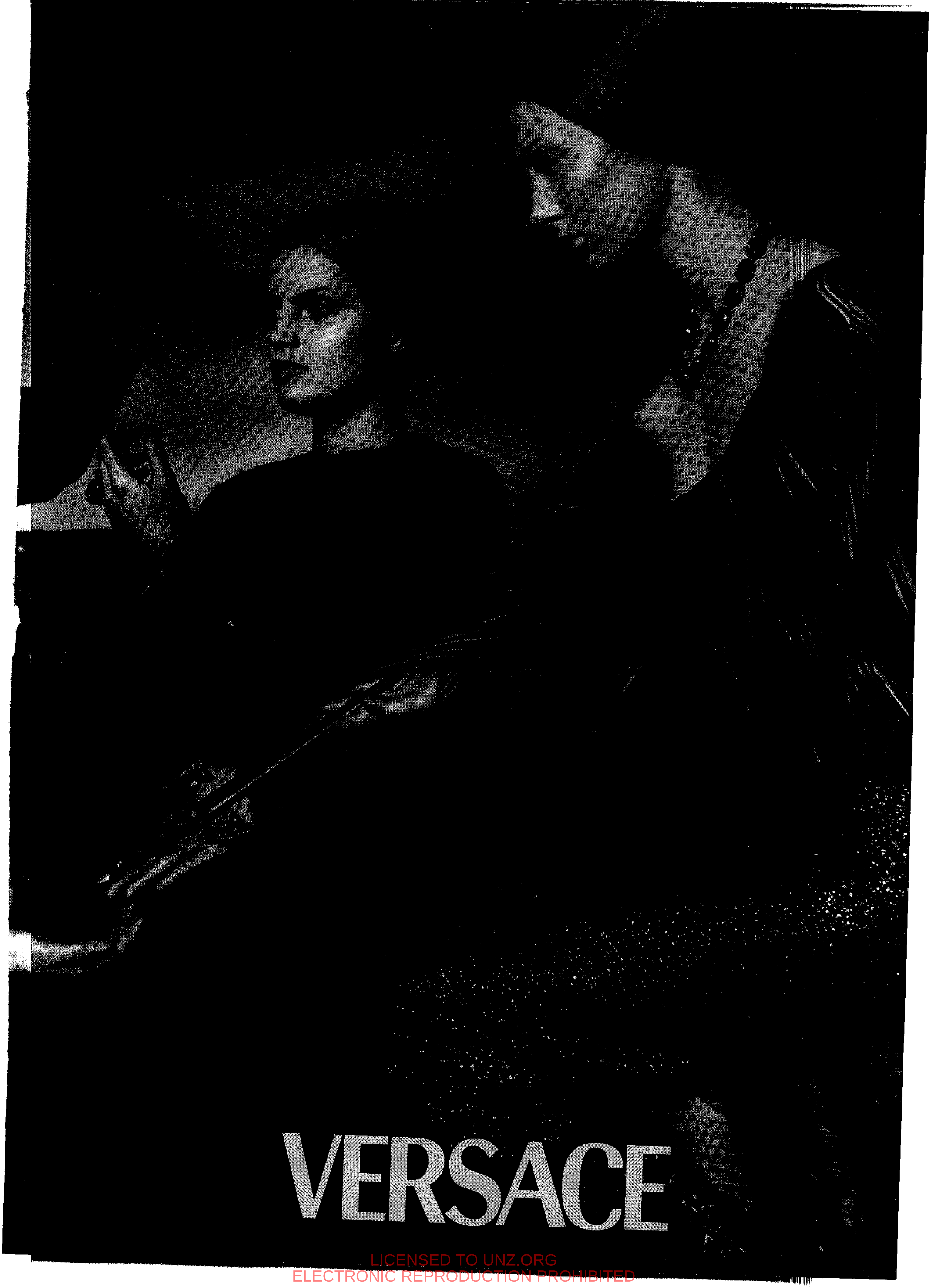
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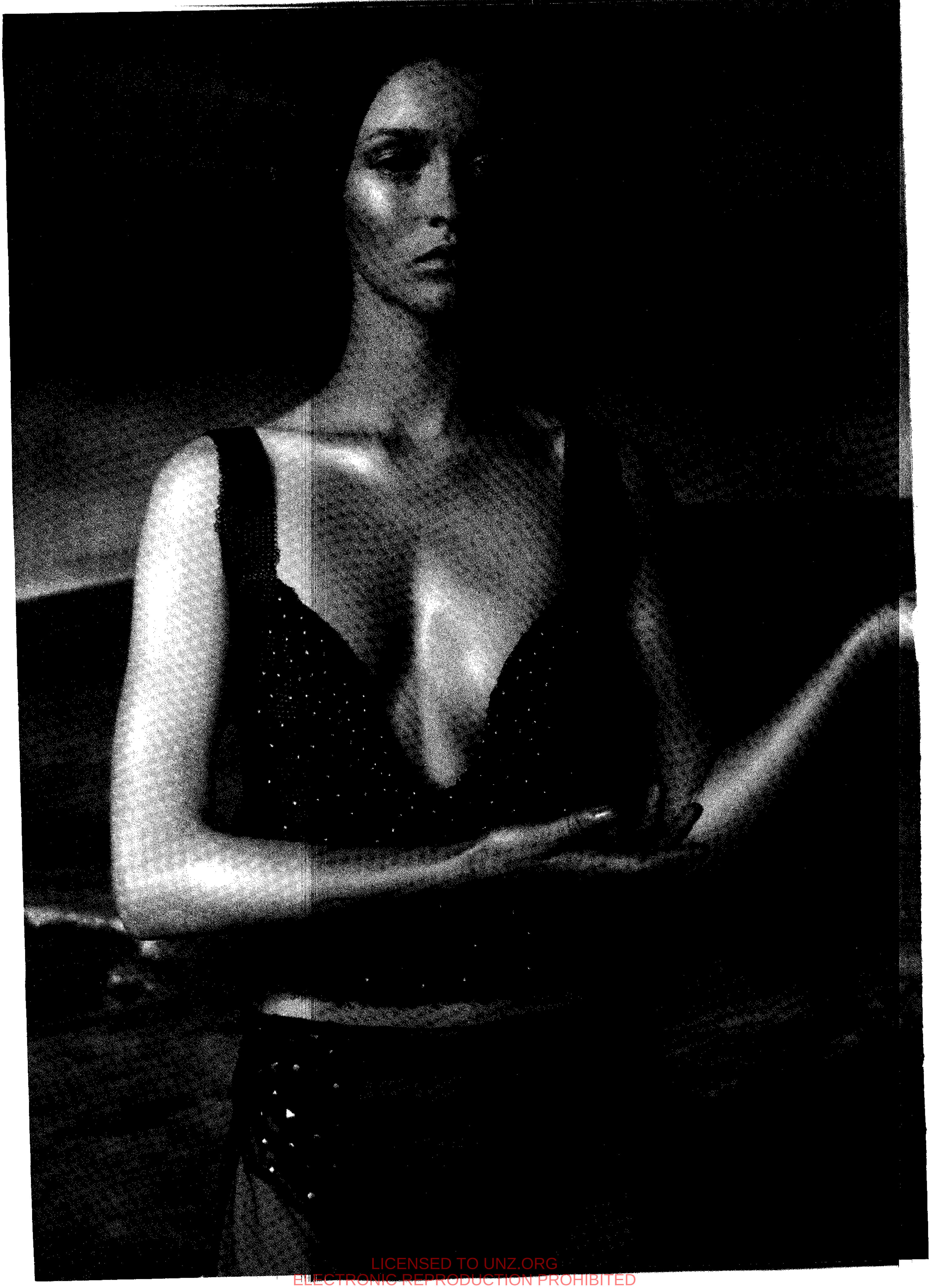

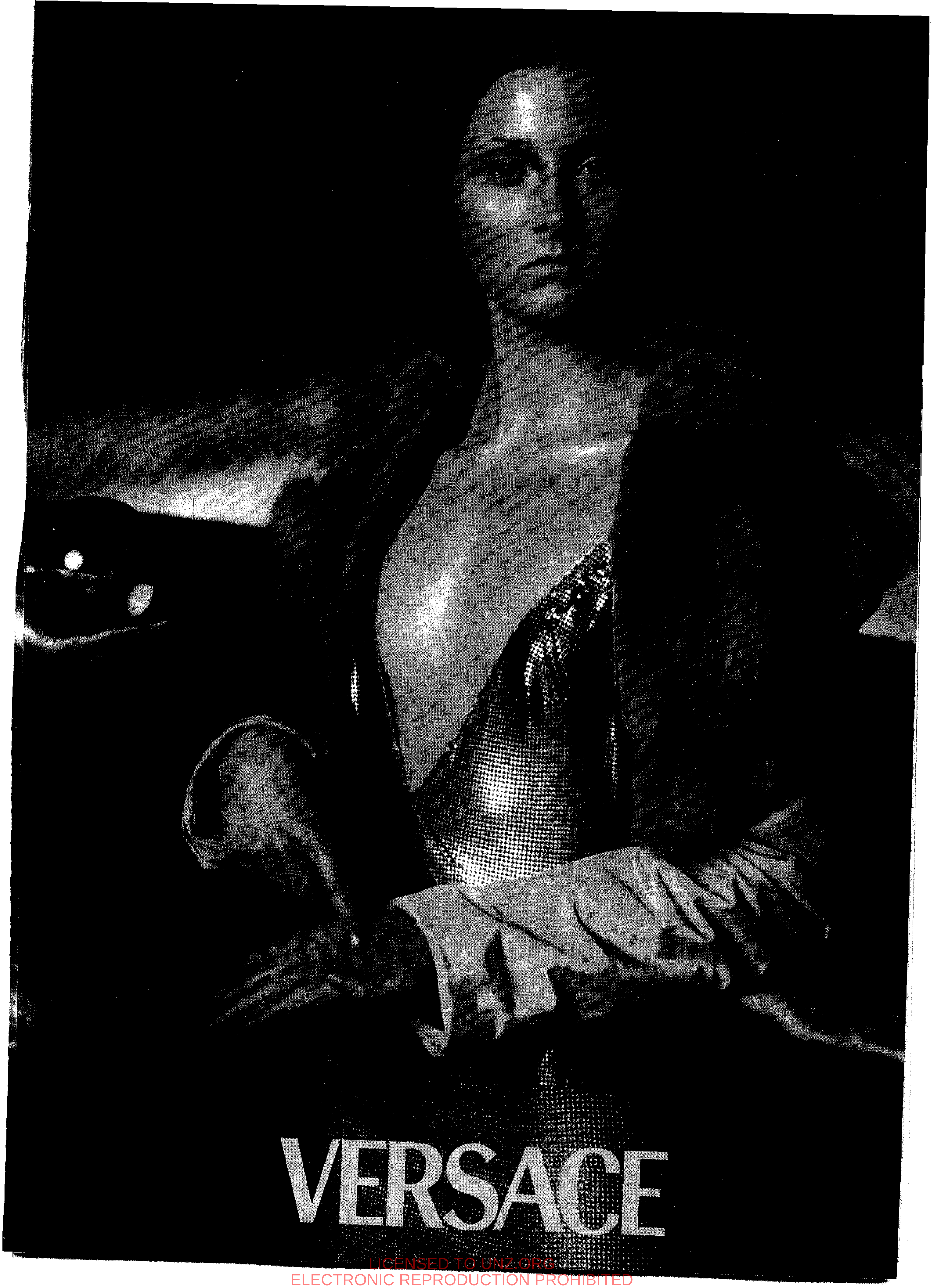
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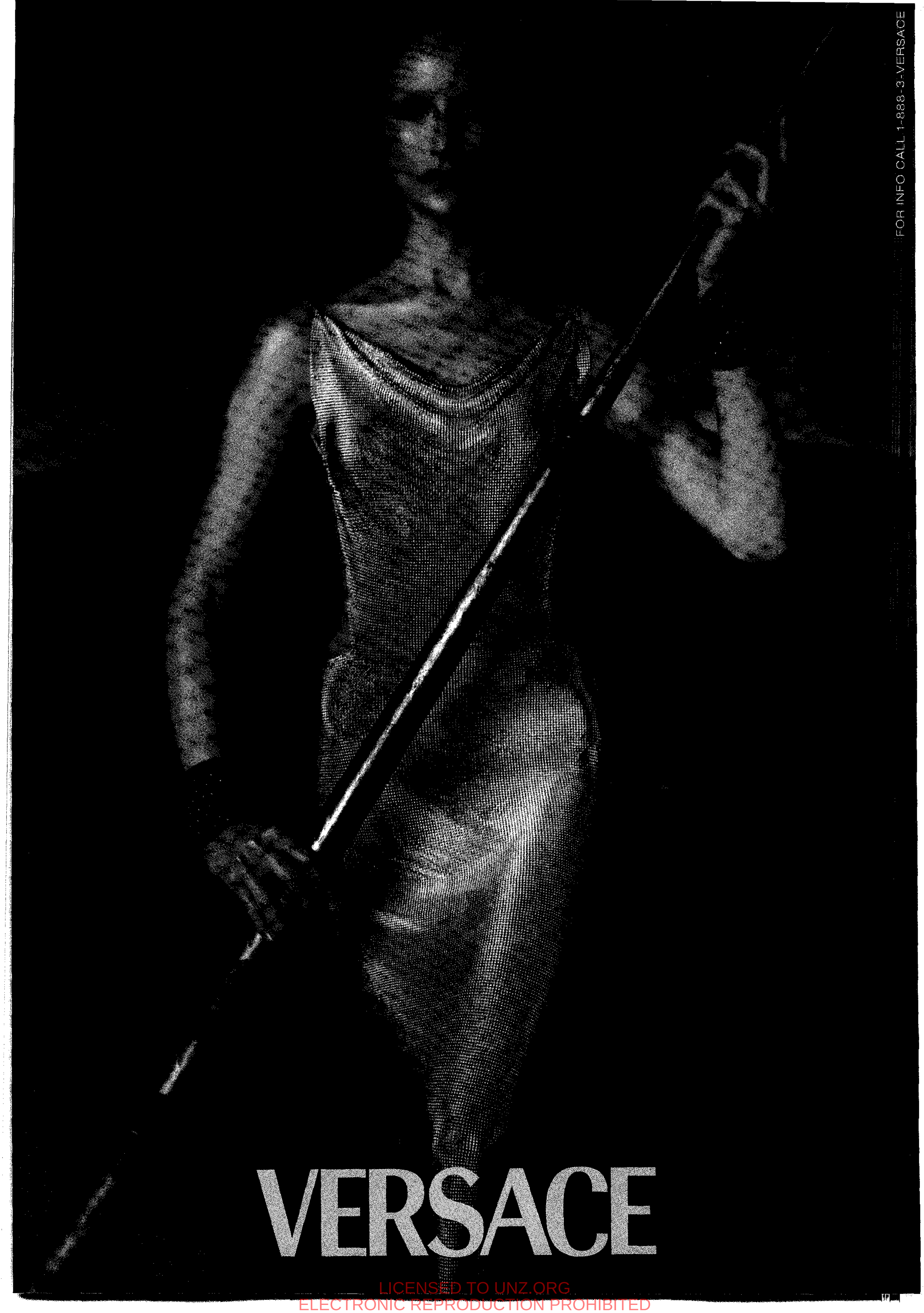
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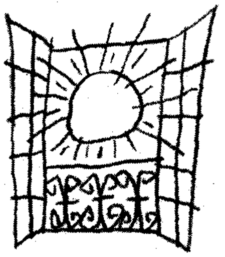
filed in court and bears the Vatican Library seal, and in which Cardinal Stickler states “ELAINE IANNESSA (et al.) has my authorization to act as my agent to secure a Licensing contract with the Biblioteca Vaticana.” Stickler also signed a letter stating that Father Boyle was “the legal representative duly appointed by the Vatican and has the only legal right to sign contracts binding” the library.

In 1988, when Peconi met Father Boyle, she began to polish her business plans. As she came to know the hidden riches of the library, her head began to whirl with commercial possibilities: books, CD-ROMs, greeting cards, scarves, jewelry, religious vestments, commemorative coins, and collectible items. Father Boyle was both charmed and appalled by Peconi’s untutored enthusiasm. “She had a great facility for getting names mixed up, particularly Bramante, Bernini,” he testified in one deposition.

According to Peconi, the library had already rebuffed business overtures not only from CBS but also from J. C. Penney and American Express. “I think they were afraid to get involved with a large corporation, and I think they thought that because I am a woman they could control me,” Peconi says. Boyle relied on the good word of a Los Angeles priest instead of conducting a financial-background check on Peconi. Had he done that, he would have learned that she and the man who was then her husband had filed for bankruptcy in 1987. (The filing was dismissed when a bank foreclosed on their home in Pasadena.)

Boyle suggested the name of the company—the Cortile del Belvedere—but he otherwise had little patience for details of the business. In 1988, he and Peconi narrowly escaped entering into a partnership with a man who turned out to be a professional con artist. “Father was naïve, and he was greedy—greedy for the Vatican Library,” according to Peconi, who then proposed another investor, Leroy Carver III. Peconi knew Carver’s father, who had run a Rolls-Royce dealership in Southern California, but she claims not to have known that the younger Carver, while he was successful in real-estate ventures, had also owned a savings and loan in Escondido, which had failed in 1989, costing American taxpayers about sixty million dollars. (Carver has testified that she did know.) Carver appears to have emerged from the S. & L. failure with his personal fortune intact, and he was eager to invest in Cortile del Belvedere. Both Boyle and Peconi now say they had reservations about Carver, but this did not stop them from agreeing to give him a forty-per-cent share of the profits of Cortile del Belvedere, in return for a nonrefundable payment to the library of three million dollars, together with a million and a half dollars in operating capital. The contracts were drawn up exclusively by Carver’s attorneys; Boyle did not even have them examined by a Vatican lawyer. Peconi requested a copy of Carver’s résumé, but they closed the deal before it arrived. “Elaine to me was a person who had a very good idea, but she was not sophisticated enough to make this thing bulletproof,” I was told by Suzelle Smith, an attorney who represented the library when Carver sued to recoup his money. “This deal was bigger than she was.”



Within a few months, the relationship between Carver and Peconi began to sour. He had expected her to move to Rome right away and became impatient when she delayed. Eventually, Carver drove up to Peconi’s house, in Lake Arrowhead, and discovered that she had recently moved—to the grand Casa Felice quarters, where she still lives. Carver suspected that this expensive new home might have been bought with some of the three million dollars he’d invested, and at a certain point he stopped making previously agreed-upon payments into the operating account of Cortile del Belvedere. Peconi then accused him of breach of contract and rescinded their agreement. In April, 1990, just nine months after forming the partnership, Carver sued.

In the course of litigation, Carver was able to confirm that Peconi had bought her new home with cash from the Vatican Library. Nine days after receiving the three million dollars from Carver, Father Boyle had made a wire transfer to Peconi for a million and a half dollars, and within a month she had paid for the Casa Felice property with a million in cash. Carver, in his lawsuit, referred to the transfer as a “kickback.” Boyle maintains that he gave the money to Peconi purely as a loan, to be paid back with interest. “There was nothing in the contract that says I couldn’t take a loan,” Peconi declares. “I paid back the loan—it was a legal loan.” (Peconi did pay back the principal of the million-and-a-half-dollar loan in 1994, but she still owes the library some of the interest.) This apparently innocent explanation was undercut, though, by a typed note from Peconi to Boyle which was produced in court. It read:

> Dear Father,
>
> This letter will serve as my “note” to you. . . . May I borrow back $1,500,000.00 from your share. This will be used to pay back some of the monies I have borrowed over the years to keep this project afloat. . . . I just don’t think it is right for me to leave with all the bills behind me. . . . I can’t feel good about it. . . . I will repay you immediately from the sale of the first license. Thank you Father, I prefer to keep this between you and I, Father.

“The whole thing was naïve enough to appear like collusion,” Boyle told me later. Moreover, he said, Peconi had never told him that she intended to use the money to buy a house. “If I were an ordinary member of a jury, I might have thought it looked bad, too,” he added.

Although the Holy See later accused Boyle of acting entirely on his own, he testified that he had consulted the Vatican’s Secretariat of State when Carver filed his lawsuit, and that he had been told to handle the matter himself. As a trial date drew near, following the six-year discovery process, Boyle began to push for a settlement but didn’t have the funds to meet Carver’s demands. (Carver wanted his initial three-and-a-half-million-dollar investment, plus interest and six years of attorneys’ fees.) Boyle had to appeal to his superiors at the Vatican. “Only on April 14, 1995,” a Vatican complaint filed against Peconi states, “did Father Boyle give further information to the Prefecture for Economic Affairs concerning the case and declared that he committed the grave error of not having presented the entire situation at the right time to the competent Ecclesiastical Authority." The Office of Economic Affairs took over the litigation, hired its own lawyers, and, in 1996, reached the $8.8 million settlement with Carver; Peconi agreed to pay half that amount back to the Vatican.

A few months afterward, Boyle was asked to step down. He arranged to leave on May 24, 1997, the thirteenth anniversary of his arrival as prefect, so that his early retirement would not give rise to gossip. Three weeks before that date, however, the Vatican decided to carry out its police blitz, casting a heavy cloud of suspicion over Boyle's departure. The Holy See also declared all the library's contracts with Peconi and her licensing subcontracts null and void, on the theory that Father Boyle had been acting without authorization, but that may have compounded the problem. "I own the Vatican Library! And there's nothing they can do about it," Peconi told me in December of 1997. "As long as Father Boyle was there, I would never have done anything against them, but now I am going to sue them," and, indeed, she has since sued the Vatican for fraud and breach of contract. (On August 7th of this year, a California judge decided that the case will be tried in a United States federal court.)

Despite the lengthy litigation, however, Cortile del Belvedere had become profitable. In 1992, Peconi struck a half-million-dollar deal with Turner Publishing, which produced a lavishly illustrated family Bible that sold very well. A Bahamian company, Illuminated Filmworks, paid three million dollars for film and CD-ROM rights. Another company paid nearly a million and a half dollars to produce christening gowns, bronze figurines, and greeting cards. Echo Design Group bought the rights to reproduce images on scarves, ties, and linens. Other companies made rosaries, religious vestments, pillows, and greeting cards. "They produced things of very good taste, which are selling in Neiman Marcus, Marshall Fields, and the finest emporia in the United States," Boyle says. Boyle himself was, in fact, a considerable asset to the new business. "If somebody was looking for a certain kind of image, he knew exactly what would be right, because nobody knows that collection like Father Boyle," Peconi said. "All of our licensees love him."

"I think we should all be thankful that Bill Clinton never had an inappropriate relationship with Joyce Maynard."

But Father Boyle's puckish humor sometimes got the better of him. He told one licensee that a silver hammer with which the Pope breaks the seal on a door at St. Peter's each jubilee year was actually used to tap an ailing Pope's body to tell whether he was dead or alive. The licensee, who was Jewish, went around repeating the story until Peconi told him that Father Boyle had been joking.

Earlier this year, Peconi gave me a list indicating that she had sold more than twenty sublicenses, for a total of more than seven million dollars. According to her contract with Father Boyle, forty per cent of the proceeds go to the Vatican Library. Boyle and Peconi had also set up two shops on the library premises that were earning several hundred thousand dollars a year, according to Peconi's sales figures. The Vatican Library received half of all proceeds, after payments to licensees and operating costs. So there was reason to suppose that the Vatican Library would have more than made up the money it had lost in the court settlement. "Every penny we made can be accounted for, and these various licenses paid for the rewiring of the library, the new registration desk, the air-conditioning system, and the Barberini periodical room," Peconi told me. By shutting down Cortile del Belvedere, she pointed out, the Vatican had shut off this source of funds to the library, and had also set off a second round of litigation, which could cost millions more. The Vatican "thinks you can just take people's money, spend it, and then rip up the contracts and sell new licenses," Peconi says.

MONSIGNOR FRANCESCO SALERNO, a legal expert in the Vatican's Office of Economic Affairs, was charged with reorganizing the library's business and defenestrating Father Boyle, and was recently rewarded with a promotion to bishop for his efforts. "If you knew Vatican law, you would know that the books in the library belong to the Pope and the Holy Father alone—no one else has the right to dispose of them," he told me when we talked on the phone. But he refused to meet with me or discuss the case in detail.

Despite Salerno's position that Peconi has no valid legal rights, he did try to reach a settlement with her. One of the sticking points was that in 1994 Father Boyle, without getting any more money from Peconi, had signed a new contract, which superseded their previous agreements and extended her control over library licensing to the year 2024, with the option for another thirty-year renewal after that. Boyle told me at the time that he had seen no reason not to renew Peconi's contract, because business was taking off and the litigation seemed to be petering out. The Vatican offered Peconi a fifteen-year contract, retroactive to 1989, which would have run its course in just six years.

The Vatican's rough treatment of Father Boyle appears to be part of a legal strategy to paint him as a rogue priest, so that the Holy See can disown the contracts he signed. "If I tried to sell you the dome of St. Peter's, would you buy it?" Salerno asked. As the Los Angeles attorney Suzelle Smith says, "That's going to be a hard sell, to say that Father Boyle didn't have the authority. After all, he organized a show with the Library of Congress, and nobody said he shouldn't do that. The stores were operating right down the corridor from the Vatican Museum." (Smith has her own reasons for taking this position: the Vatican has yet to pay her firm $1.3 million in legal bills for the Carver litigation.)

Lost in all this controversy is the fact that Boyle succeeded, to a remarkable degree, in fulfilling his grand vision for the Vatican Library. Scholars in the newly wired, air-conditioned reading room tap along quietly at their laptop computers. His project to computerize the listings for a million and a half printed books is nearly complete. Far more than a mere catalogue, the Vatican program has a powerful search engine that is a genuine research tool. Moreover, thanks to Boyle's generosity and imagination, the library's mainframe computer is linked to all the catalogues of most of the foreign scholarly libraries in Rome.

The I.B.M. project is moving forward, although it has a long way to go. It took two years to digitize twenty thousand images, and this figure represents the contents of only about a hundred and fifty of the hundred and fifty thousand manuscripts in the library. But even this small pilot project has provided an intriguing look at what the future may hold. A scholar can now call up a manuscript and pore over it, using the magnification powers of the computer. In 1996, to demonstrate the possibilities of the project, Boyle and I.B.M. arranged to digitize a series of illuminated musical manuscripts so that you can listen to the music as you follow the notes on the page.

Father Boyle is confident that digitization will enhance, rather than diminish, the status of actual books and libraries. He notes, for example, that the I.B.M. technicians were seduced and humbled by their contact with the Vatican's extraordinary manuscripts. Jorge Luis Borges tells the story of a barbarian who, while laying siege to Ravenna during the collapse of the Roman Empire, sees the extraordinary beauty and richness of its civilization, suddenly switches sides, and begins to defend the city from destruction. Boyle believes that the same thing will happen with the computer and the Vatican Library. When he was negotiating with an I.B.M. executive about financing the digitization project, the man from I.B.M. asked him, "What are you prepared to put up?" Father Boyle recalled. "And I said, I'm not putting up anything. I've got a hundred and fifty thousand manuscripts. That's bigger than I.B.M. any day."

When I last saw Boyle, earlier this year in Rome, he had just returned from a clinic following a bad case of bronchitis. He looked even smaller and more fragile than he had the previous summer. Nevertheless, he sees his own private misfortune within a bigger picture, about which he remains optimistic. Though he was fired and humiliated, his vision has prevailed. Many people in the Vatican who were skeptical about computerizing the library collection are impatient to get rid of Peconi and proceed with I.B.M. "The library is five hundred and fifty years old, and it will survive this, too," Boyle says. ♦

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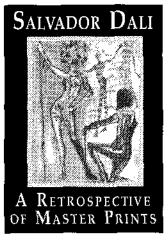
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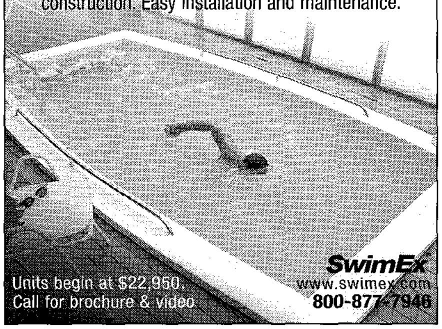

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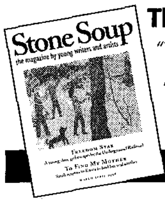

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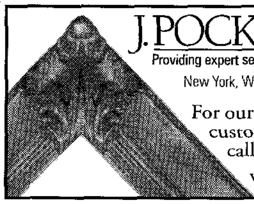

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LIFE AND LETTERS

FIRST LOVES

Isaiah Berlin was the century's foremost defender of liberty, provoked, in part, by an all-night conversation with the Russian poet Anna Akhmatova.

BY MICHAEL IGNATIEFF

IN September, 1945, Isaiah Berlin, a thirty-six-year-old Oxford don, flew into Moscow carrying winter clothing, small Swiss cigars with plastic holders, and a package containing boots for the poet Boris Pasternak, given to him by Pasternak's sister Lydia, who lived in Oxford. The journey was a homecoming—Berlin's first.

Berlin always thought—and certainly told me so, during ten years of conversations together until his death, late last year—that his visit to Russia was the most transforming event of his life. He was born in Riga, the son of a Jewish timber merchant, and had lived in Petrograd during the Bolshevik Revolution. When he was eleven, he had emigrated to England with his family, and he still spoke a rich, tsarist-era Russian. Although he had longed to return, he was highly apprehensive. He was visiting as a British official, in order to prepare a dispatch about American-Soviet-British relations in the postwar world, but he was terrified that the Soviets might reclaim him as a citizen and never let him go. If this should happen, he told friends with uncharacteristic grimness, he would simply shoot himself.

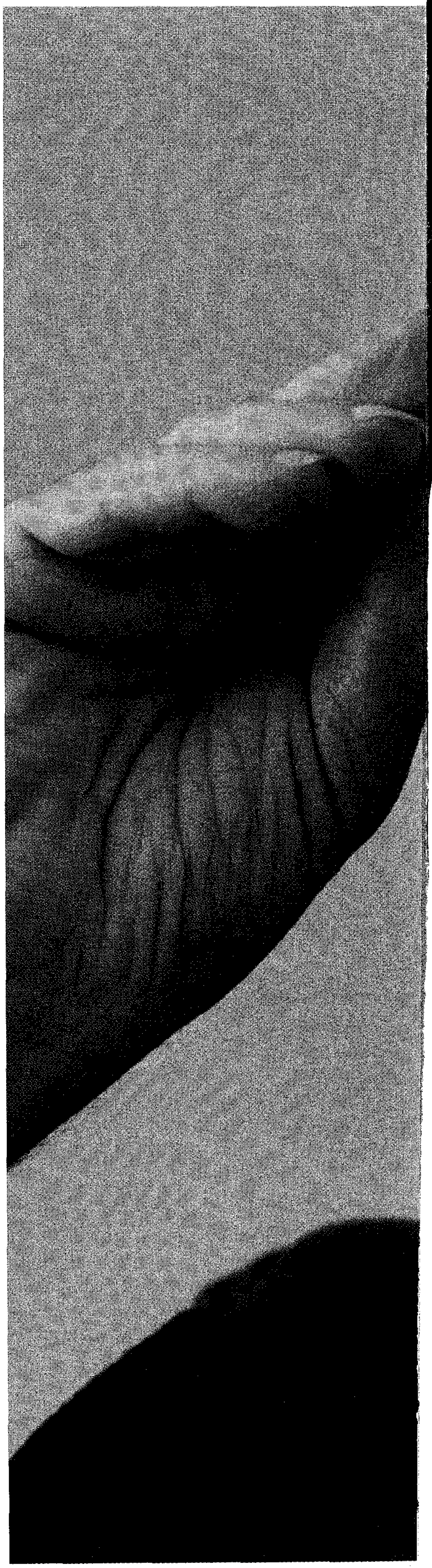
On his first night in Moscow, the British Embassy gave a dinner to celebrate the anniversary of its Russian-language propaganda sheet, *Britansky Soiuznik* (*British Ally*), and Berlin was able to meet some of the remaining free minds in the Soviet élite: Lina Prokofiev, the composer's estranged wife; the theatre director Alexander Tairov; the critic and children's writer Korney Chukovsky; and the film director Sergei Eisenstein. These guests, to their astonishment, found themselves talking to a British official who not only spoke their language fluently but whose form of thinking, Tairov enthused, was "entirely Russian."

Stalin had recently reprimanded Eisenstein for the second part of his "Ivan the Terrible," having taken it as an allegorical denunciation of his own paranoid rule. Eisenstein was looking tense and distracted. Hoping to draw him out, Berlin asked him when he had been happiest. In the early twenties, Eisenstein replied wistfully, when experimentation was still allowed. He recalled a night in a Moscow theatre when grease-smeared pigs had been let loose in the audience. Berlin asked why all the artistic experimentation of the twenties had come to an end. "Things change," Tairov said gloomily. Then, after a time, he added that things "also do not change. This is even worse." He stared down at the tablecloth in silence, looking old and broken.

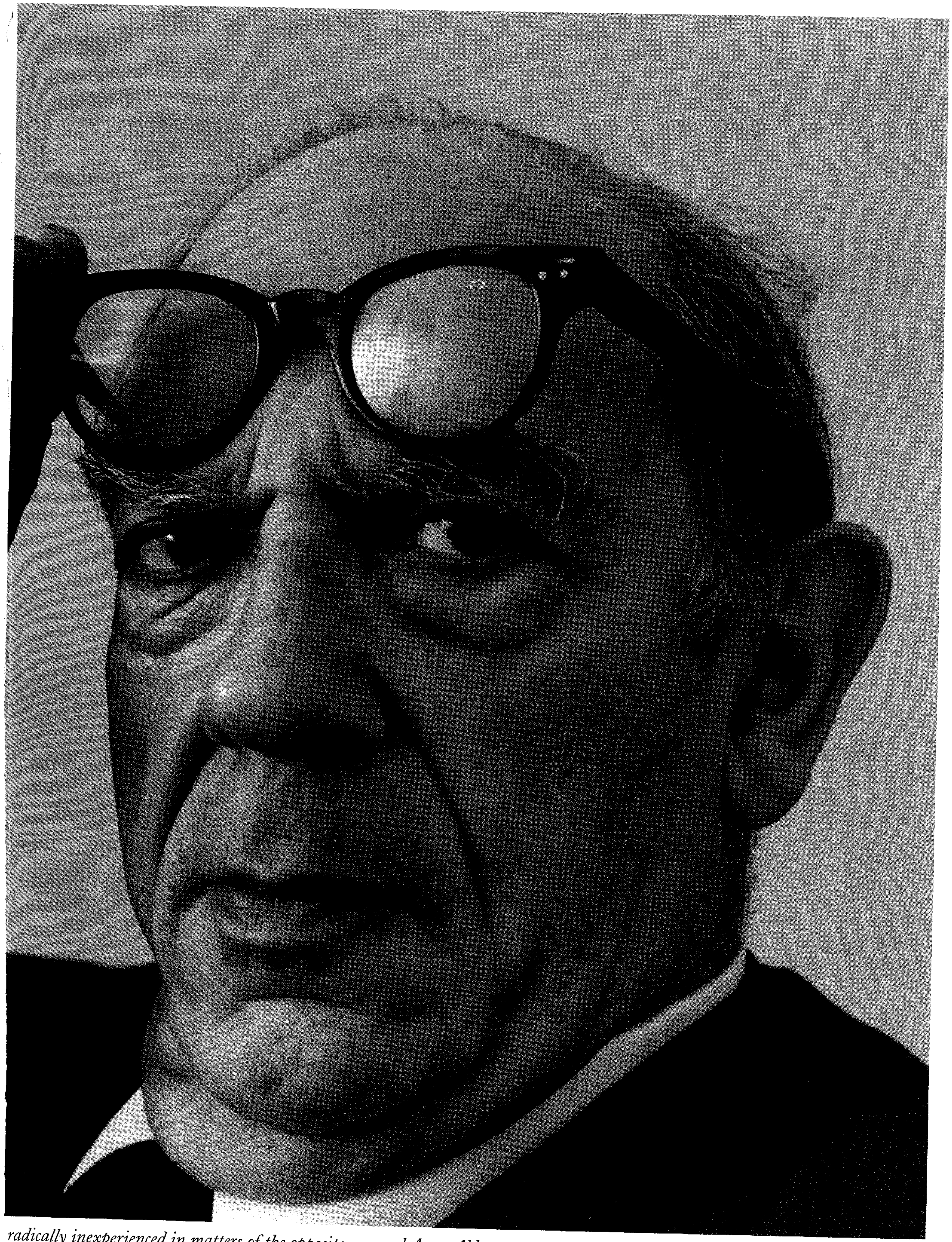
In 1917, when Berlin was nearly eight, he had seen the first, glorious morning of the Revolution in Petrograd. From the windows of his family's apartment, he'd watched the crowds demonstrating against the Tsar. Isaiah's parents, like most liberal Jews, shared the popular excitement. When it seemed safe, the boy and his governess went out for a walk. Suddenly, the road filled with a small group of men, perhaps fifteen in all, sweeping past with a frightened man in their clutches. Afterward, Isaiah learned that the man was a *pharaon*—one of the municipal policemen, who were the last people in uniform to remain loyal to the old regime. All that Isaiah had time to see was a man with a white face who was twisting and turning as he was borne away. It was clear that he would not escape alive.

Berlin's whole intellectual life was to be a reckoning with the Soviet experiment and the consequences of the Russian Revolution. In the thirties, when his Oxford contemporaries were intoxicated

PHOTOGRAPH BY ARNOLD NEWMAN



By his own admission, Isaiah Berlin was



radically inexperienced in matters of the opposite sex, and Anna Akhmatova was one of the fabled seductresses of Russian culture.

"And now, if you don't want to know today's Dow Jones closing, look away from your set until the music stops."

• •

with revolutionary Marxism, the memory of that moment survived within him: it strengthened his horror of physical violence and his suspicion of political experimentation, and deepened his lifelong preference for all the temporizing compromises that keep a political order safely this side of terror.

Now, in 1945, from his first night in Moscow, Berlin could feel the atmosphere of gloom, shame, and fear among "the scared ones" who had managed to survive Stalin's wholesale extermination of the Russian intelligentsia in 1937. The pace of destruction had slowed with the war and, with the war over, these survivors were testing the water—daring to accept once forbidden invitations to a foreign embassy. But no one at that party knew whether it was a harbinger of better times to come or whether the St. Bartholomew's night of terror would return.

WHEN Berlin ventured out of the Embassy, he discovered a city that was still gripped by the euphoria of victory over Hitler. He hadn't heard his native tongue spoken in the street since his family went into exile. Then they had been escaping the privation of Lenin's regime and, in his father's words, "the feeling of being imprisoned, no contact with the outside world, the spying all around, the sudden arrests and the feeling of absolute helplessness against the whim of any hooligan parading as a Bolshevik." In Moscow, a quarter century later, as Berlin explored the streets of the Arbat district, descended into the Metro, and listened to women in the queues outside bread shops, he was absorbing the Russian life from which he had so long been exiled. In a letter home he exclaimed, "I had forgotten that such emotions and expressions existed." It soon became obvious, however, that he was being followed. Trenchcoated figures were sliding in and out of the crowd behind him.

On two occasions, Berlin left a ballet performance at intermission, eluding the secret police, in order to visit his father's brother Leo and his family in their Moscow apartment. Leo, a professor of dietetics, was mild and charming, but he never ventured into political discussion. Politics was simply too dangerous a subject. But he did let slip one remark. When Isaiah suggested that life as a university professor must not be so bad, Leo asked him, pointedly, "Have you been to Florence?" and then "Have you been to Venice?" Isaiah nodded, and Leo replied with quiet poignancy, "We would like to go there, too."

ON a sunlit afternoon at the end of that September, Berlin took a short train ride to Peredelkino, the artists' colony, where Pasternak had a dacha. He found the poet, his wife, and his son seated around a rough wooden table in their back garden. Pasternak, then fifty-five years old, had a "dark, melancholy, expressive" face, Berlin later wrote in an essay about Russian writers. When Berlin handed him the boots, the poet appeared to be embarrassed, claiming that they must have been intended for his brother. The atmosphere was chilly and distant as Pasternak warily took the measure of his foreign visitor.

Pasternak had seen most of his friends executed or banished to labor camps. He himself was too eminent to be touched, but he had been forced to abase himself in ways that would torment him for the rest of his life. In 1936, when senior Party figures, accused of terrorism, were put on trial, the Soviet Writers' Union had joined in baying for their heads, and Pasternak was one of sixteen writers who signed a published appeal for their execution, under the heading "Wipe Them from the Face of the Earth!" Berlin knew nothing of this. For him, Pasternak represented the uncrushed part of the artistic flowering during the last years of tsarist rule. He had come to Peredelkino as a hero-worshipper. It took him some time to see these survivors in a more complicated light.

Perhaps because of his fluent old-style Russian, so evidently unmarked by Soviet deformities, Berlin was able to get Pasternak to talk. The war, Pasternak confessed, had enabled him to break his intellectual isolation and become part of the patriotic struggle. He had toured the front lines, giving readings, and had been moved to tears by the discovery that when he faltered, or misremembered a line, soldiers in the crowd would supply the missing verses from memory.

In the shaded back garden, as Berlin gained his confidence, Pasternak relaxed. He began speaking, Berlin later wrote, "in magnificent slow-moving periods, with occasional intense rushes of words," which often "overflowed the banks of grammatical structure." Berlin was doubtful about Pasternak's view that the war had been a necessary purgatory for the Russian soul. Even so, there was no doubting that with the end of the war Pasternak had approached a turning point in his artistic life. He confided in Berlin—the first foreigner to be so trusted—that he had a new project: a novel about his generation and their fate in the Revolution and the war.

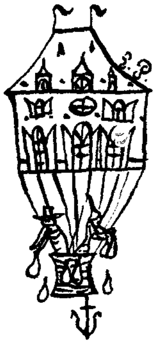
Later that autumn, Berlin visited Pasternak at his Moscow apartment, where the poet revealed his torment at being thought to have collaborated with the regime and his anguish at being Jewish. The whole subject of his identity, Berlin noticed, caused him "visible distress." He longed to be considered an authentic Russian patriot and to have his work accepted as the true voice of the Russian people, yet because he was a Jew he was never allowed to feel that he belonged. He feared that he had deformed his talent in order to survive. He gave the impression, Berlin observed, of wishing that he had been born the flaxen-haired blue-eyed son of a peasant.

Eleven years later, in July of 1956, Berlin returned to Peredelkino, and Pasternak handed him a package containing a manuscript that he said he was determined to publish in the West. Berlin urged him to consider the consequences, saying that it would court martyrdom, and that martyrdom was a moral temptation, like any other. But Pasternak brushed aside his worries and begged him to help him get it published. Berlin took the manuscript back to the Embassy and sat up all night reading it. When he finished, he knew that Pasternak had resolved his crisis of identity with a supreme act of artistic achievement and political defiance. Back in London, Berlin was instrumental in securing an English translation. The book was "Doctor Zhivago."

In November of 1945, Berlin received Intourist approval to visit Leningrad—his childhood Petrograd. He set off on the Red Arrow overnight sleeper, along with an organic chemist named Brenda Tripp, who represented the British Council. She confided in her diary that he was shy, avoided contact with her, and covered up his nervousness with rapid-fire talk. After supper in the dining car, they returned to their sleeper, he in the top bunk, reading in his pajamas, and she in the bottom. When he turned out the light, she noted, he threw all the newspapers down on the floor like a child tossing his toys out of a pram.

After checking in at Leningrad's Astoria Hotel, Berlin sought out his family's old apartment on Angliiskaya Esplanade. He lingered outside in the snow, taking in the dank atmosphere of the inner courtyard, which was as sordid and abandoned, it seemed to him, as when he had last seen it, in Lenin's time. He felt himself suspended, half in the too real past, half in the unreal present. It was, he later wrote, as if "I had walked into a legendary city, myself at once part of the vivid, half-remembered legend, and yet, at the same time, viewing it from some outside vantage point." He wandered through the city in a melancholy daze. The people on the streets looked shabbier and more emaciated than the Muscovites. Hitler's nine-hundred-day blockade marked every face.

The next day, at the top of the Nevsky Prospekt, Berlin and Brenda Tripp came upon the Writers' Bookshop. Behind the counter of the outer room were shelves lined with pre-Revolutionary books. There was also an inner room, behind a curtain. The manager of the shop was a "small, thin, gay, baldish, red-haired Jew" named Gennady Moiseyevich Rachlin, and he invited them into the inner sanctum. Figures in tattered coats were leafing through the old volumes and gossiping quietly among themselves: Russian literary life was still alive. Rachlin boasted of a roster of powerful clients, and he believed that these various authorities, both secular and ecclesiastical, would continue to protect him. His optimism struck Berlin as naïve, but his mood was infectious. Berlin got into a conversation with one of the people browsing in the back room. He turned out to be the critic and historian Vladimir Orlov. The two-and-a-half-year siege of the city, he told Berlin, had been unimaginable: virtually all the children born during those years had died. Rachlin and Orlov had both been kept alive, they said, by special rations issued to intellectuals. Rachlin joked that for rationing purposes he had been classified as a "second-rate writer." He said he could still taste the carpenter's glue that he had diluted with water to drink as soup.



Berlin began asking about the fate of the city's writers. Orlov mentioned two—Mikhail Zoshchenko, whose mordant and melancholy satire "Scenes from 'The Bathhouse' " had made him one of the most popular Soviet writers of the nineteen-twenties, and Anna Akhmatova, a poet of the pre-Revolutionary era. Although the regime had silenced them both, it still considered them national treasures. After the Germans surrounded the city, in the autumn of 1941, Party bosses had ordered that the two writers be flown over German lines to Moscow and from there to Tashkent. In 1944, they had returned to Leningrad. Zoshchenko, as it happened, was sitting right there in the bookshop; he was yellow of complexion and, in Berlin's words, "pale, weak and emaciated." Berlin shook his hand but did not have the heart to engage him in conversation.

When Berlin inquired whether Akhmatova was alive, Orlov replied, "Why yes, of course. She lives not far from here—on the Fontanka, in Fontanny Dom. Would you like to meet her?" Berlin later recalled that it was as if he had been invited to meet Christina Rossetti or some other fabled name from the pages of literature. Orlov made a phone call and returned to say that the poet would receive them that very afternoon at three o'clock.

The man who went to see Akhmatova that afternoon was of medium build and inclined to portliness; he had thinning dark hair and a weakened left arm, which he held close to his body. Isaiah Berlin thought himself unprepossessing, even ugly. In his usual deflationary style, he always said that he was just a typical Oxford don. Yet he was not typical. A Russian exile, in 1932, when he was only twenty-three, he became the first Jew elected to All Souls College, the Mt. Parnassus of Oxford. By then, he already had a reputation as a brilliant talker, with a clipped martial style of delivery which all his friends tried unsuccessfully to imitate. His reputation subsequently gained him entrée into the Bloomsbury world of Virginia Woolf, who had been entranced by his talk.

From 1937, Berlin's rooms at All Souls were a meeting place of a circle of young thinkers, among them Stuart Hampshire, A. J. Ayer, and J. L. Austin. It was they who founded Oxford analytical philosophy, the most influential philosophical movement in Britain and America between 1945 and the nineteen-sixties. The evenings in his rooms were often noisy duels of will. At stake was the very nature of their discipline: whether philosophy should try to be a science. Berlin contributed to the creation of logical positivism as a movement in Anglo-American philosophy, but his interests would turn out to be elsewhere. The scientific basis of his friends' approach was too narrow; ethical, historical, and political questions didn't matter. Berlin found himself attracted to a philosophy grounded in the history of ideas. And on the eve of the war he had published a biography of Karl Marx. Berlin hated Marx's ideas, but this did not stop him from trying to understand a temperament completely unlike his own.

In an era of passionate commitment, Berlin considered himself a disengaged liberal. In his work he tended to seek out those who struggled, as he did, to preserve their intellectual freedom at a time of violent ideological antagonisms. He had discovered the writing of Alexander Herzen, an aristocratic exile and foe of tsarism, and Herzen's memoirs became one of Berlin's favorite books. But while Herzen was a kindred spirit—a generous, thoughtful, comic, and morally serious man of letters—he was also a challenge. In his life, he had showed courage and a level of political commitment that Berlin believed he himself lacked. In England, as a Jew and a foreigner, he felt that he wasn't cut out for political commitment.

Berlin was also troubled by personal commitment, and, for most of the thirties, he was a spectator—amused by the entanglements of his friends, keeping a distance from his own emotions. As his friend the poet Stephen Spender noted, Berlin "had an interest in other people's lives which was strengthened by the conviction that he himself was detached from the passions which moved them." Another friend, Sally Graves, a beautiful and much pursued woman, once reproved him languidly, saying, "What some people don't seem to realize, is that people have *appetites*." Berlin was afraid of appetite, yet he insisted that he wasn't just a bloodless bystander. In a letter to the novelist Elizabeth Bowen he cited Tolstoy as an example of an observer who managed to plunge into life, to commit himself, to give himself wholly and "lose nothing irrecoverable." But the question for Berlin was whether he would live by this example—whether he would ever take the plunge into the emotional and political turmoil that he was usually content to watch enveloping others.

He left Oxford during the war and went to New York to work for the British Information Services; after Pearl Harbor, he went to Washington, where he wrote a weekly dispatch for the Foreign Office about the state of American political opinion. These dispatches made him famous within the upper reaches of the British establishment; Churchill called them "perfervid"—a little too vivid, but irresistible. In America, there had even been a long, unconsummated, but intoxicating relationship with Patricia Douglas, a hauntingly attractive, gamine-faced English aristocrat then remaking herself into a serious person in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Berlin may have gone out into the world, but he still hovered on the brink of full adulthood, in both an emotional and an intellectual sense. What changed all that was the meeting with Akhmatova.

AKHMATOVA lived in a third-floor apartment in Fontanny Dom, an eighteenth-century palace. What had been Baroque yellow-and-white plasterwork was pitted with shell fragments and worn away by neglect. Akhmatova had a room looking over a courtyard. It was bare in the extreme. There were no carpets or curtains—just a small table, three or four chairs, a wooden chest, a sofa, and, above the stove, a drawing of Akhmatova, reclining on a couch, with her head bent, rapidly sketched by her friend Amedeo Modigliani during a visit she had made to Paris in 1911. It was the only memento of a Europe she had last seen thirty-four years before. Now, on this November afternoon, wrapped in a white shawl, she rose to greet her first visitor from that lost continent. Isaiah bowed. "It seemed appropriate," he later wrote in an account of their meeting, "for she looked and moved like a tragic queen."

Twenty years older than he and twice married, she had been a famous beauty in her youth. Now graying and shabbily dressed and with heavy shadows beneath her dark eyes, she still had a stately carriage and wore a coolly dignified expression. Berlin knew her as a brilliant and beautiful member of the pre-Revolutionary circle of poets known as the Acmeists; he knew about Petersburg's wartime avant-garde, which met in the Stray Dog cabaret, and about her famous poetry recitals there. But about what she had subsequently lived through he knew nothing.

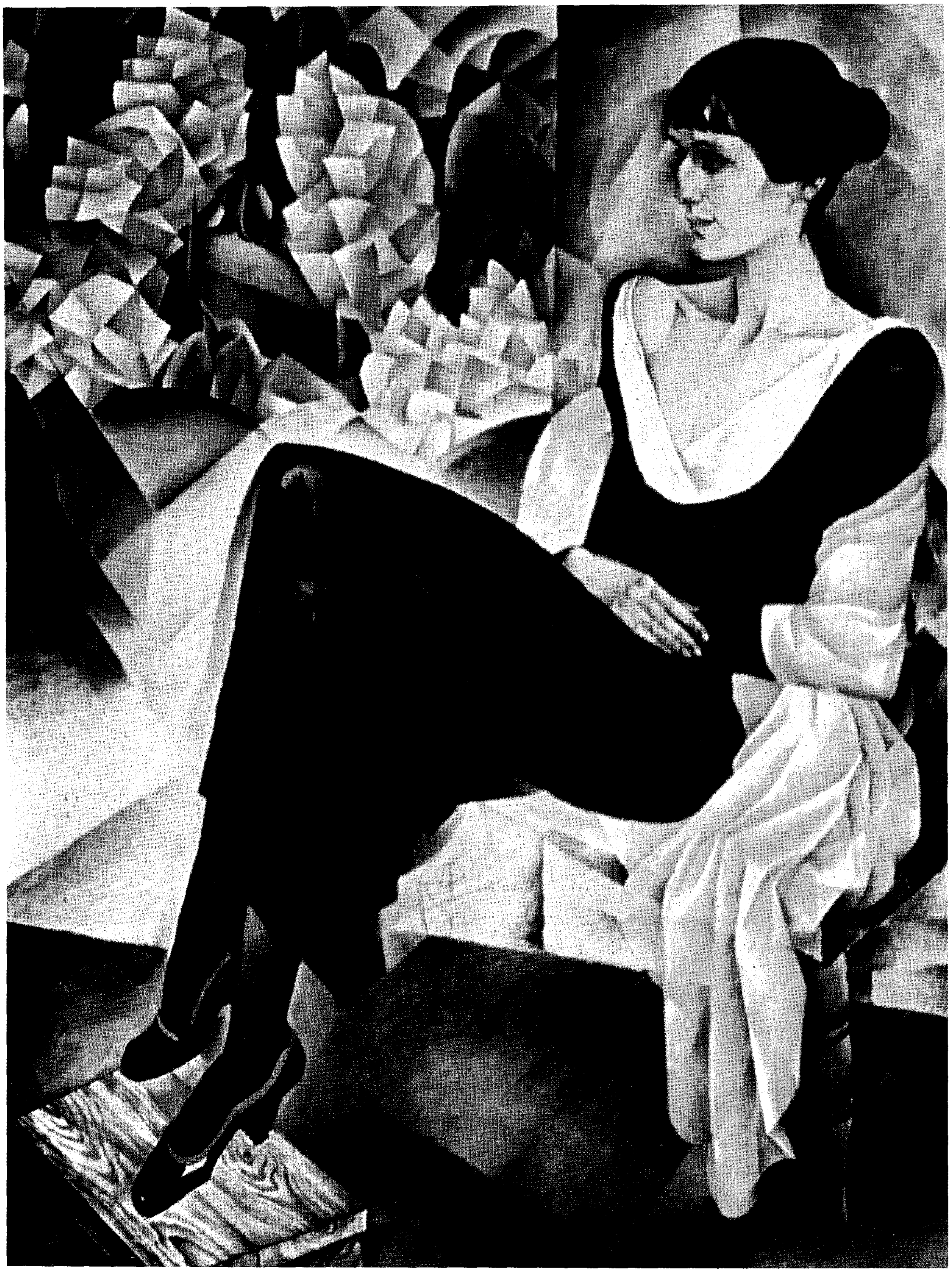
For Akhmatova, the years of terror had begun not in 1937 but in 1921, when her first husband, Nikolai Gumilyov, was executed for allegedly taking part in a plot against Lenin. Although she wrote continuously, she was not allowed to publish a line of her poetry between 1925 and 1940. As terror sealed the lips of those around her, she made herself the poet of despair and abandonment. A cycle of poems, "Requiem," composed in the late thirties and early forties, preserved the torments of the generation crushed by Stalin.

During her wartime evacuation to Tashkent, she was permitted to publish a volume of "Selected Poems" and to give readings in hospitals for wounded soldiers. In May, 1944, when she was allowed to return to Leningrad, she stopped in Moscow and gave a reading that ended with the audience rising and applauding her as the incarnation of the untarnished and victorious Russian language. She was terrified by this mark of respect, because of the attention it would bring. Her fear was justified, for Pasternak reported to her that Stalin himself had supposedly asked Andrei Zhdanov, the chief of the Soviet cultural bureaucracy, "Who organized this standing ovation?"

What possessed her now to take the risk of inviting a British official to her apartment? Like Pasternak, she must have felt that the war's end heralded a thaw. There were no hostages whose safety she had to take into consideration. Her son, who had been in prison, had just been released. Whatever the reason, Berlin was a visitor from, in her words, "the other side of the looking glass"—from the free world.

They were formal and constrained in each other's company, discussing how London had survived the war. As they talked, Berlin suddenly heard his

GRANGER COLLECTION



Akhmatova, in a 1914 portrait. Thirty years later, she was terrified by the adoration of her public. It made her a marked woman.

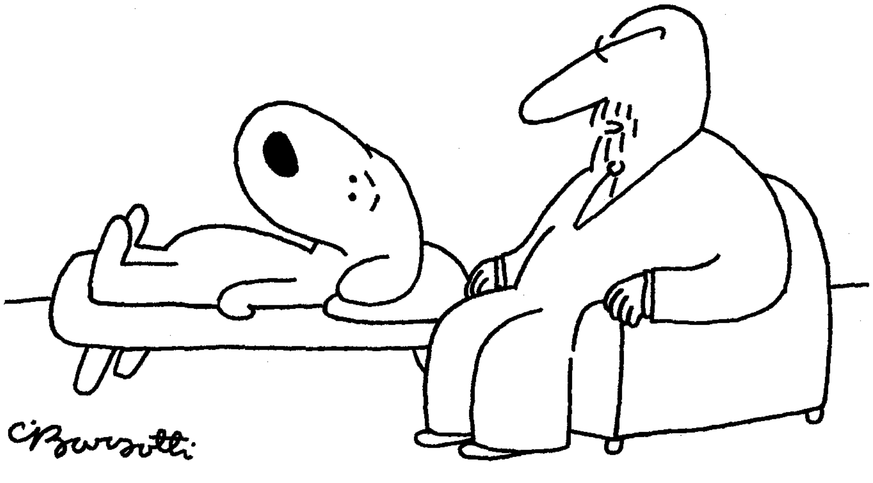
name being shouted outside. He went to the window and, to his horror, saw Randolph Churchill standing in the middle of the courtyard, bawling up at him, Berlin later wrote, "like a tipsy undergraduate" in an Oxford quadrangle. Berlin muttered an apology and fled, followed by Orlov. In the courtyard, Berlin introduced the Soviet critic to the son of Winston Churchill. Now any chance that the meeting with Akhmatova could pass unnoticed had been thrown away. Indeed, absurd rumors immediately began to circulate that Churchill was in Leningrad to reconnoitre a British rescue operation that would whisk Akhmatova to England. The fact was, however, that the younger Churchill simply wanted Berlin—whom he had known as an undergraduate—to be his interpreter. He had learned that Isaiah was in Leningrad when he ran into Brenda Tripp at the Astoria and enlisted her help in explaining to the hotel staff that the caviar he had just purchased should be placed on ice. It was several hours before Berlin managed to escape his clutches.

He telephoned Akhmatova to apologize. "I shall wait for you at nine," she told him. When he returned, a learned woman was present who asked him questions about English universities while Akhmatova remained silent. It was midnight before the woman left and Akhmatova and Isaiah were alone. The room was poorly lit; she sat in one corner, he in another. Almost immediately, they began talking as if they had known each other all their lives. In her eyes, he was serving as a messenger between the two Russian cultures—one in external exile, the other in internal exile—which had been split apart by the Revolution. In the poems she wrote after his departure, she said that Europe was putting out its leaves: a green shoot from the culture that had once been hers had at last coiled its way into Fontanny Dom.

Nevertheless, she was categorical about the question of emigration: she would never leave Russia. Her place was with her people and with her native language. That night would acquire another significance for her: it reaffirmed her sense of destiny as the all-enduring Muse of her native tongue. Berlin was quite sure he had never met anyone with such a genius for self-dramatization, but he also recognized her claim to a tragic destiny.

He had always sought validation by genius: it mattered intensely to him that he had met Virginia Woolf, Freud, Wittgenstein, and Keynes, and that they had all seen his worth. But this encounter mattered more than any other. Here was the greatest living poet of his native language talking to him as if he had always belonged to her circle, as if he knew everyone she knew, had read everything she had read, understood what she said and what she meant.

In a burst of enthusiasm and nostalgia, she told him of her childhood, on the Black Sea coast—"a pagan, unbaptised land"—and of her lifelong affinity with "an ancient, half-Greek, half-barbarian, deeply un-Russian culture." He told her stories of his childhood in Riga and of his early years in Petrograd, and recalled how, when she was already a poet so famous that her admirers could recite the whole of her latest collection verbatim, he was still a child, sprawled on the floor of his father's study reading adventure stories.



"And only you can hear this whistle?"

Soon she was reciting her own poems, including the still unfinished "Poem Without a Hero," which was begun in Leningrad in 1940. It was, Berlin later wrote, "a kind of final memorial to her life as a poet, to the past of the city," and took the "form of a Twelfth Night carnival procession of masked figures." Listening to her, he could not have known that in this work—which she was to revise until 1962—he would eventually figure as the mysterious "Guest from the Future."

In the near-darkness of her room, they shared the only food she had—a dish of boiled potatoes—and talked passionately about Russian literature. He shared her reverence for Pushkin and her distaste for Chekhov's "mud-colored world," but he couldn't share her love of Dostoyevsky, and she had no time for his affection for Turgenev. These were not mere differences of taste: they marked the boundaries between their emotional worlds. Berlin was drawn to the lightness, delicacy, and irony of Turgenev; Akhmatova identified strongly with Dostoyevsky's dark depiction of inner emotional states.

Berlin was also pleased to discover a scornful, sarcastic, and slightly malicious side to the poet, for it replaced the regal demeanor with something more humorous and more human. She was a consummate actress, one who had mastered a queenly role but who was also shrewd enough to detach herself from it and to see herself and others with an occasional glint of mockery. She spoke amusingly about Pasternak's recurrent crushes on her—how in the twenties he would come over and sigh that he could not live without her, only to tire quickly and beg his wife to come and take him back.

She confessed how lonely she was, and spoke of her past loves—of her executed husband and all the men she had lived with since. He confessed that he was in love himself. (He didn't mention any names, but he was evidently thinking of Patricia Douglas.) Akhmatova listened without comment but later passed on to Korney Chukovsky an extravagant version of what he'd said. Chukovsky's memoirs improbably cast Berlin as a Don Juan debarking in

8 P.M., AUGUST OF THIS YEAR

The wet cicadas scree-slide over how many miles
of air surrounding my body? I hear how my ears,

hearing, answer a moment,
ring for a moment,

saying, *Am I blinding myself*
to be in the sun in a summer haze?

No, it's no blind street just now, no
fatal accident. No disaster.

It's not killing myself—just some self-love, some love,
some only pleasure—to be as I am.

The sun's rose neon—brighter. Bright as multiple lumens.
I did avert my eyes to see it.

Rose neon hung to burn on a gray wash. Backwoods
here, and all around
these noisemakers, ongoing humming creatures.

Here is the sound I've missed
like missing the crows or starlings.

It's just old.
It's a long pleasure:

ongoing humming creatures,
noisemaker-urgent again—

more than halfway loving,
as if it were songs, approaching music.

Is it really only a long pleasure
to be as I am? The scree-slide's swinging around,

but I'm not in danger. Not about to be lost in the sun
just yet, or the big sun. The cicadas' round-and-round is

nothing resembling a human quarrel
or losing battle. Is only round.

—Elizabeth Macklin

Leningrad to add Anna Akhmatova to the list of his conquests. She herself was responsible for this erotic *malentendu*. No Russian who reads "Cinque," the series of poems she devoted to that evening, has ever been able to believe that they did not sleep together.

The fact is that they never even touched. He remained on one side of the room, she on the other. The mismatch in their experiences and expectations was comic. By his own admission, he was radically inexperienced in matters of the opposite sex, and she was one of the fabled seductresses of Russian culture. From Akhmatova's poetry, we know that she was already investing their meeting with mystical, historical, and erotic significance. He, by contrast, was aware of more quotidian needs. He had been there six hours and wanted to go to the lavatory. But it would have broken the mood (the communal toilet was down the dark hallway), so he remained and listened, talking about music and tracing in the air notes of a Mozart aria with the glowing end of his Swiss cigar.

Their conversation ranged back and forth, creating a chain of associations which was to bind them together for the rest of their lives. He asked her whether the Renaissance was a real world to her or an imaginary one, and she said that it could be only imaginary. All poetry and art, she said, were a "form of nostalgia, a longing for a universal culture, as Goethe and Schlegel had conceived it, of what had been transmuted into art and thought—of nature, love, death, despair and martyrdom, of a reality which had no history, nothing outside itself." In his own mind, the evening with Akhmatova took him as close as he was ever to get to the pure realms of art.

By then, it was light outside, and they could hear the sound of freezing rain falling in the Fontanka. Exhausted, he took his leave of her—kissing her hand—and walked back to the Astoria, dazed, "turned over," exalted. He looked at his watch and discovered that it was eleven in the morning. Brenda Tripp, who had waited up for him, remembered him saying when he threw himself down on the bed of his room, "I am in love, I am in love."

Six weeks later, Berlin's visit to Moscow was over, and he had to return to Washington. But he wanted to see Akhmatova one more time. He took the Red Arrow overnight and booked into the Astoria again. He was due to leave from the Finland Station for Helsinki the next day. That afternoon, he called at Fontanny Dom. Akhmatova gave him several volumes of her poetry, each inscribed to him in her own hand. In one of these dedications, she wrote out a quotation from "Poem Without a Hero," as if the lines, written long before, had been a foretelling of their meeting: "No one knocks at my door, Only the mirror dreams of a mirror, And quietness stands guard over quietness—A. 4 January 1946."

They parted without touching. At the border with Finland, a Soviet customs official looked over the books, inscribed by the proscribed poet, bowed gravely, and let him pass. Absently, he journeyed through Helsinki, Stockholm, and a Paris as "clean, beautiful, empty, and silent" as a tomb.

Within days of Berlin's departure, the secret police arrived while Akhmatova was out and clumsily installed microphones in her ceiling. They did not even bother to clean up little piles of plaster they left behind on the floor. From Moscow, Pasternak reported to her an ominous piece of gossip—that Stalin, on hearing from Andrei Zhdanov of her meeting with Berlin, had exclaimed, "So now our nun is consorting with British spies!" Akhmatova took an ironic pleasure in the attention. Indeed, she believed that the onset of her persecution in 1946 marked the real beginning of the Cold War.

In the Leningrad headquarters of the K.G.B. there are three volumes of files on Akhmatova. In 1993, in Moscow, a former K.G.B. operative named Oleg Kalugin gave a lecture on them, disclosing that the K.G.B. had forced an unnamed Polish woman, who was translating Akhmatova's work, to inform on her; that she had told the K.G.B. that the English spy Berlin visited Akhmatova on two occasions and declared his love for her. Even through the coarse alembic of an informer's gaze, Akhmatova comes across as melancholy, proud, and unafraid.

In April, 1946, Akhmatova travelled to Moscow and, with Pasternak, gave a poetry reading in the Hall of Columns. In a letter that Berlin received in July, 1946, through the British Embassy, he was told by Pasternak:

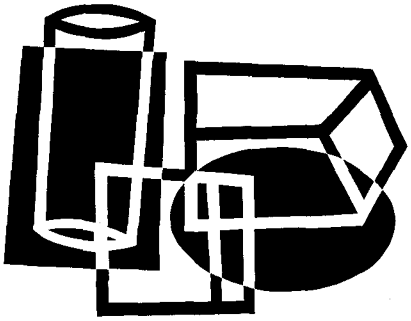
> When Akhmatova was here her every third word was—you. And so dramatically and mysteriously! At night, for example, in a taxi on the way back from some evening or reception, inspired and weary, and slightly in the clouds, in French: *Notre ami* (that's you) *a dit* . . . or *a promis* etc. etc. In the end, those of her friends who were jealous of her [attachment] to you began to pester me with requests: Boris Leonidovich, please describe Berlin for us, who is he and what is he like? Then followed my praises and only then did their real torments begin.

Once again, as in 1944, Akhmatova inspired an outpouring of emotion which she was right to fear. On September 4th, she was expelled from the Writers' Union, and her book of poems was pulped. Overnight, she became a non-person—although admirers, often without knocking at her door, continued to lay bouquets of flowers, or sometimes even a parcel of food, at the entrance to her apartment.

Through 1947 and 1948, various people at the British Embassy in Moscow attempted to allay Berlin's anxieties about her fate. But in April of 1948 friends advised him that xenophobia was running so high that any attempt to make contact with Akhmatova would only endanger her further. For the next six years, he had no further news.

The year 1948 marked the beginning of a period of terrible anti-Semitism in Russia, which Berlin had detected when he was there. It culminated, in 1952, with the arrest, trial, and execution of fifteen prominent Jewish intellectuals. That same year, a number of Jewish doctors were arrested and charged with plotting the murder of Stalin and other government officials. Berlin's Uncle Leo was rounded up and confronted—as K.G.B. archives, now open for the first time, reveal—with accusations that he belonged to a British spy ring. The K.G.B. maintained that British intelligence had "placed" him in the clinic of medical dietetics in order to gather information on the health of Stalin and other Soviet leaders. The purpose of Isaiah's visit, so the interrogators insisted, was to take Leo's information back to London. Leo Berlin was beaten until, after several attempts at suicide, he made a confession. He was then held in prison for more than a year, and was released in February, 1954. As he was walking in the snowy streets in Moscow, still weak after his release, he saw one of the interrogators who had tortured him, and had a heart attack and died. All his life, Isaiah regretted the naïveté that had led him, unintentionally, to put his own family in such jeopardy.

As for Akhmatova, these years extinguished the brief hope of freedom she had entertained in the autumn of 1945.



Her son was arrested again, and, in desperation, she bowed to the regime, composing a few perfunctory and unconvincing odes to Comrade Stalin in an attempt to secure her son's release. This gesture was all the more humiliating because it was unsuccessful. Stalin was not fooled. Indeed, he could have read in the K.G.B. file the astringent things she was saying about him. As Oleg Kalugin reports, she greeted her fate with a certain grim relish. She remarked that if the Party had chosen not to suppress her but to corrupt her with a dacha and a car she would be forgotten in a year. People, she is supposed to have said, do not forget those who suffer.

BERLIN had been sent to Moscow to report on Soviet foreign policy, but instead he chose to write "A Note on Literature and the Arts in the R.S.F.S.R. in the Closing Months of 1945." Its modest title belied its ambitions. It was nothing less than a history of Russian culture in the first half of the twentieth century—a chronicle of Akhmatova's fateful generation. It was the first historical reckoning with Stalin's war on the Russian intelligentsia. But Berlin insisted that Stalin had not succeeded: the authentic voice of Russian culture, he wrote, remained in the "real nucleus of ageing but articulate intellectuals, deeply civilised, sensitive, fastidious and not to be deceived, who have preserved unimpaired the high critical standards, in certain respects the purest and most exacting in the world, of the pre-revolutionary Russian intelligentsia." Such figures remained for him the gold standard, the touchstone of moral integrity, for the rest of his life. In December, 1962, when he was asked to lecture at the Kennedy White House, this was the topic on which he addressed the President. When he had finished, the President wanted to know which intellectuals after the Revolution had remained unbroken and unbowed. At the head of the list of these heroic figures, Berlin placed Akhmatova.

Berlin could now see the Communist ideal for what it was: a conscious attempt to sacrifice the liberty of some for the sake of justice for the masses. The encounter with Akhmatova and Pasternak brought home to him the truly inhuman cost of such a sacrifice. He came away from Russia with a loathing of Soviet tyranny which was to inform nearly everything he wrote thereafter.

"We have to be missing twenty-four hours before I consider us lost."

• •

WHEN Berlin returned to Oxford in 1946, the Cold War was beginning, and all around him intellectuals, ranging from George Orwell to Karl Popper, were taking sides. Berlin had no doubt that he belonged to the N.C.L., the Non-Communist Left, but he was a reluctant Cold Warrior. When editors from *Time* and the Washington *Post* asked him to write a ringing ideological defense of the West, he always replied that the search for credos was a sure sign of ideological desperation. And when he was pressed to summarize what Western liberalism did stand for, he liked to recall what that great survivor of the French Revolution Talleyrand had said: "*Surtout, pas de zèle*"—"Above all, no zeal." Smoke, noise, and ideological fanaticism—those were Berlin's three major dislikes in life. As Eastern Europe fell, as China was "lost" to the Communists, and as the Korean War dragged on, friends like the columnist Joseph Alsop had moments of despair about the future of the West, but Berlin, the spectator, remained serenely on the sidelines in Oxford, quietly working away on studies of the Russian intelligentsia and on the roots of that utopian faith in human reason which had inspired the Communist vision.

Berlin's serenity, however, was deceptive. His visit to Akhmatova had given him a crucial sense of validation, and rekindled his passion for all things Russian. A friend of his who was studying classics had once told him about a line he'd come across from the Greek poet Archilochus which had all the elegance of a haiku: "The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing." For Berlin, the distinction dramatized the ultimate incompatibility of different types of moral and artistic personalities, and he immediately began dividing up the great minds of the past: Goethe and Pushkin were foxes; Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy were hedgehogs. In 1951, the idea recurred to him when he was working on a study of Tolstoy: it seemed to illuminate the fissure between Tolstoy's foxlike gift as a novelist for capturing the fine detail of human life versus his hedgehoglike search for an overarching theory of human existence. But this was also a fissure within Berlin. Most of his friends saw him as an arch-fox—quick-witted, darting from subject to subject, eluding pursuit. Yet he also longed to be a hedgehog—to know one thing, to feel one thing more truly than anyone else. He had reached what he recognized was a critical stage: either he would go on to develop a serious intellectual engagement of his own or he would decline into being what he feared most—a "chatterbox."

IT was in America, where he took up a quarter century of visiting appointments at several universities, that the fox discovered he was a hedgehog after all. He found the "one big thing" that was to order his intellectual life thereafter: a defense of freedom, which insisted on the inevitability of tragic choice in human life.

In January, 1949, he went to Harvard, where he was attached to the Russian Research Center. At first, he was miserable, teaching an undergraduate course on Russian thought, struggling through the lectures in an agony of self-consciousness. His students didn't seem to know how to read or write. The worst seemed deaf to irony while the best seemed beset with guilt. Gradually, though, the contrast between the moral exaltation of Akhmatova and the Russian intellectual tradition, on the one hand, and the bland psychological discourse of the eager young American undergraduates, on the other, began to intrigue him. The students seemed baffled by the idea that life's essential problems might not always be soluble, whereas for Berlin this was to misunderstand what made life worth living.

Berlin had few brushes with tragedy in his life, but he did have a deep sense of inner division. His deepest loyalties—Russian, Jewish, and English—were not conveniently layered one on top of another. They were in conflict, and their resolution was painful and protracted. He was a fox who longed to be a hedgehog; a solitary thinker who longed for society; a liberal often torn by the displeasure that his middle course earned him from friends on the left and on the right.

In 1952, he gave a series of lectures

entitled "Political Ideas in the Romantic Age" at Bryn Mawr College. Here, for the first time, he began to take issue with the central assumption of liberal reform since the European Enlightenment of the eighteenth century: that the good things that people want in politics *and* life must be compatible. The Enlightenment philosophes, he told the Bryn Mawr audience, believed that all people wanted the same goals—liberty, equality, and fraternity, for example—and that these goals were not in conflict. When conflicts did arise, they were obviously mistakes—legacies of injustice or inadequate education—and could be swept away by rational reforms. But what if this wasn't true? What if the goals themselves were in conflict?

No one in the twentieth-century liberal tradition was to ask this question with such quiet tenacity. Six years later, the question was posed again in his inaugural lecture as Chichele Professor at Oxford. "Two Concepts of Liberty" was delivered in October, 1958, in the very weeks when "Doctor Zhivago" was appearing in English, and Pasternak was beginning the violent course of worldwide fame and heartless persecution which was to end with his death, in 1960. Berlin made no mention of Pasternak's travails, but more than one listener heard the defense he offered for the embattled lib-

SEVEN UP

Although he was a co-founder of the photo agency Gamma, in 1967, and joined the prestigious Magnum agency in 1978, the French photographer and filmmaker Raymond Depardon does not consider himself a photojournalist per se. When he goes to such places as Addis Ababa, Da Nang, La Paz, and Beijing, he spends most of his time the way a travel writer does, walking the streets or the dunes or the mountains trying to see the people he encounters as a native resident would. "Voyages" (Hazan), an omnibus collection of works from Depardon's forty-year career, published earlier this year in France, is now available in the United States. Included is this portrait, taken in Harlem in 1981, of girls in the Police Athletic League gleefully jumping double Dutch.

POLICE
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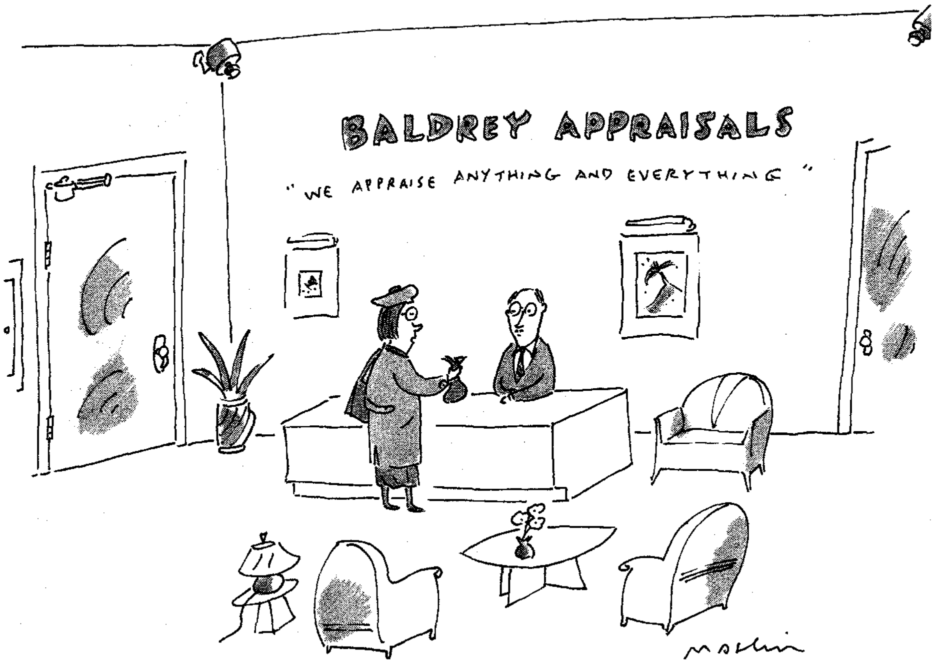
MAGNUM


BALDREY APPRAISALS
"WE APPRAISE ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING"

"Could you tell me the shock value of this?"

erty of the individual as a passionate plea on behalf of his Russian friend.

"TWO CONCEPTS" has become the most influential statement of liberal belief of the past fifty years. In it Berlin sharply distinguished the liberal credo from its radical, socialist, and Communist cousins through his exploration of the idea of liberty itself. Liberals "want to curb authority as such," he said with blunt succinctness, while all others "want it placed in their own hands." He made a vital distinction between two ideas of freedom. Negative liberty, according to Berlin, was at the heart of a properly liberal political creed. Individuals should be left alone to do what they wanted, provided that their actions did not interfere with the liberty of others. Such a liberal politics dealt only with what human beings said they wanted, not with what they might want if they only knew better. Positive liberty, by contrast, was at the heart of all political doctrines, from socialist to Communist, that wished to use political power to free human beings so that they could realize some hidden or repressed potential.

All revolutionary tyrannies, and especially the Communist experiment, Berlin argued, believed that they had the right to force men to be free, whether or not they felt they wanted any such freedom in the first place. Positive liberty, he said, is fatally prone to a strange reversal—one in which the result can be no liberty at all. It begins with a positive ideal of freedom—one that is meant to make for self-mastery and self-creation—and ends with a dictatorship of the proletariat and Stalin's engineers of human souls.

The lecture was defending the liberty of the individual, rather than any idea of democratic government as such. Democratic government, Berlin claimed, "may, on the whole, provide a better guarantee" of negative freedom than other regimes, but only, he felt, "on the whole." What about those who wanted to play no part in the democracy? Against the whole republican tradition, which had always made active citizenship a central value, Berlin also defended the liberty of those who wanted to keep out of politics. There was no reason to suppose that participating in the politics of the day was essential for all people. Why should citizenship improve human character? Politics wasn't properly about human emancipation at all; it was about keeping human conflict from becoming murderous.

The robust afterlife of "Two Concepts" would be inexplicable if it had been only a defense of the liberal capitalist status quo. But it was more: it was a whole psychology—a view of human beings choosing between often incompatible and incommensurable goals. In practical politics, Berlin was neither a conservative nor a laissez-faire individualist but a New Deal liberal, convinced that individuals could not be free if they were poor, miserable, and undereducated—that liberty was liberty only if it could be enjoyed in some degree of social equality. But he challenged the whole postwar social-democratic tradition by pointing out that the values at the heart of it—equality, liberty, and justice—contradicted each other. For example, it might be necessary to increase taxation on the incomes of the few in order to bring greater justice to the many, but to declare that no one's liberty would suffer as a result was a perversion of language.

All serious political choice involved loss: either so much liberty was sacrificed for so much equality, or so much justice was sacrificed for the sake of mercy, and so on. "If, as I believe," Berlin said, "the ends of men are many, and not all of them are in principle compatible with each other, then the possibility of conflict—and of tragedy—can never wholly be eliminated from human life, either personal or social." Individuals within modern society were divided creatures, torn between private and public claims, between reason and emotion, and, crucially, between different values themselves. Loss was inevitable, and the idea of a perfect society, even a smoothly harmonious one, was not just unrealizable but "conceptually incoherent."

Berlin's argument challenged the widely held conservative belief that modern societies need "family values," or "common values," or a "moral core," in order to hold themselves together. People are not held together by any kind of moral consensus. They are held together because of their capacity to understand moral worlds different from their own. Our differences were fundamental, but they were also intelligible. Because they were intelligible, they could be resolved.

BERLIN came under fire from all sides. "Two Concepts" put in question the élitist paternalism of his own milieu. George Kennan wrote to Berlin to ask whether the American electorate of "this sprawling, careless, lethargic country before me—this 175 million people stumbling thoughtlessly into self-indulgence, bad habits, decadence, and political apathy" could really be trusted with negative liberty. Wasn't there a case for an élite to tell them—or, at least, suggest—how they might best use their freedom? No reply from Berlin can be found, but it was a fixed principle of his that so-called élites had no business presuming that they knew better than the man or the woman in the street. From the other end of the spectrum, philosophical conservatives like Leo Strauss and Allan Bloom, at the University of Chicago, welcomed Berlin's critique of the totalitarian temptation but were uncomfortable with his equally adamant attack on their idea that the good—in politics and morals—could be identified and proclaimed from the pulpits of academia. Critics on the left singled out Berlin's skeptical attitude toward democracy. Steven Lukes, a young tutor at Oxford, argued that "Two Concepts" might be seen as an apologia for voter apathy. Berlin replied that he believed in citizenship, but that what he refused to believe was that citizenship made men better.

Berlin gave no ground. It seemed to him that the conflicts that raged about how to use freedom were bound to be irresolvable. It is this unyielding quality of his skepticism that has guaranteed his work intellectual longevity. Berlin had no program of moderate political reform to propagate; he was not interested in cultivating active political influence; he had no interest in policy. His originality lay in his psychology of the divided human self and his insight into the human susceptibility to utopias promising release from the burden of moral choice. From these central intuitions he never wavered.

Berlin wanted to believe that the united scorn of left and right vindicated the moderation and good sense of his position, but in reality he often felt equivocal and sometimes friendless. He identified more and more with the figure of Turgenev, the supreme liberal artist. He confessed to his friend Andrzej Walicki, the Polish historian of Pan-Slavism:

> I go on thinking about Turgenev: caught in a situation not all unlike our own, unable, as he said himself, "to simplify himself," constantly attacked by both sides, constantly anxious to please the young and yet, when the crisis comes, unable to commit himself totally, although perfectly able to demean himself before authority and incur the wrath of Herzen and those to the left of him.

In 1970, in a lecture on the theme of fathers and sons in Turgenev's writing, Berlin defended liberal moderation in a radical era. Like Turgenev, Berlin was fascinated by radical temperament but was incapable of being a radical himself. Like Turgenev, he had a preternatural gift of empathy—that "ability to enter into beliefs, feelings and attitudes alien and at times acutely antipathetic to his own."

Empathy was for Berlin the essential liberal aptitude—the ability to be open, receptive, unafraid in the face of opinions, temperaments, passions alien to one's own. Empathy committed you to leaving the stockades of liberal reason in order to understand reason's limited possession of a world propelled by passionate conviction. Empathy of this sort did not imply relativist indulgence: it meant coolly establishing what could be negotiated across the frontiers between convictions and what could not. The result was a moral psychology of liberal life which, while unsystematic, was as deep as anything to appear within the liberal canon since Adam Smith's "Theory of Moral Sentiments."

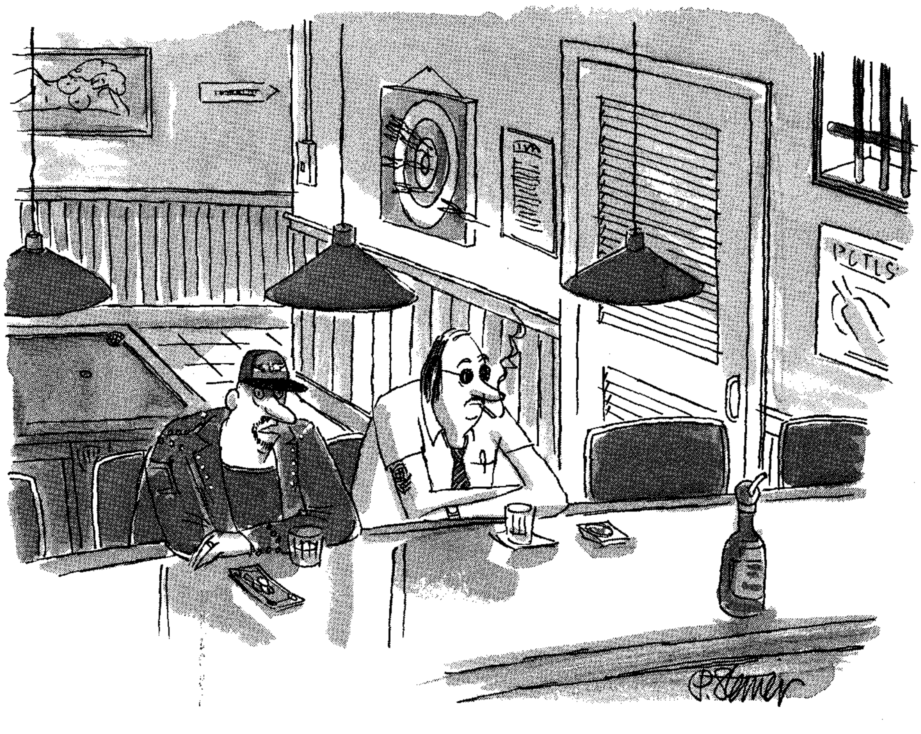
IN the years after Akhmatova, Berlin's personal life reached its moment of crisis and resolution. In June, 1949, he passed a gloomy fortieth birthday at Harvard. It was a "dreadful hump to cross," he confessed. He found it difficult to admit that he had actually become an adult:

> I cannot quite think of myself as on the side of authority, judgment etc. and I hear myself chatter and the only excuse for it is that one is full of unsifted ideas and too choc-a-bloc to have time to think and too warm-blooded to reckon the consequences and so on, and this is absurd when one is viewed as an old bachelor.

Despite a frantically busy social life, he was unsettled, and late at night he was often lonely. He told close friends that he wanted to get married, but they found the idea hard to imagine. He seemed to take no interest in their children, lacked the most elementary domestic skills, and remained very closely tied to his parents.

Oxford colleges have always served as homes for permanently arrested adolescents, but Berlin's relationship with Patricia Douglas had ignited strong longings, and he knew that for him escape into monastic seclusion was out of the question. As she careered in and out of affairs and marriages, he'd receive plaintive letters that made her seem irresistible. But when they were together she would flee to a more confidently sexual man.

Berlin's emotional state in this period is laid bare in his translation of Turgenev's "First Love," which was published in 1950. The story is an account



"He walks the walk and talks the talk. But he doesn't drink the drink."

of an adolescent swept into adulthood by the force of his unrequited passion for a woman who is older and more experienced than he is. As the story progresses, the boy discovers why the woman, Zinaida, refuses the deep commitment he longs for. She is in love with an older man. In the climactic scenes, he discovers who this older man is. One night, hidden in the shadows, he watches Zinaida and the man alone at an open window. As they are talking, the boy realizes that the man is his own father. He then watches in horror as his father raises his horsewhip and strikes her bare arm. The boy's shock is intense: "It was all I could do to prevent myself from crying out. Zinaida quivered—looked silently at my father—and raising her arm slowly to her lips, kissed the scar which glowed crimson upon it." This is an unforgettable image of love in its maddest intensity. Isaiah's identification was with the watching boy: with his choked sense of being still trapped in adolescence, able to watch but not to take part in, or even fully understand, what he was witnessing.

Isaiah's experience with Patricia Douglas might have confirmed him—or imprisoned him—in the role of the celibate bachelor. But instead of marking the end of his erotic life it marked the beginning. In 1950, he fell out of love with Patricia in the most efficient of all available ways—by falling in love with someone else. His choice was surprising: a married woman with children, who was the wife of one of his closest friends. She was a vivacious, highly intelligent woman of strong political opinions. He took to his bed with a cold in the midsummer of 1950, and when she came to take care of him he pulled her into bed with him. She was astonished and then moved by such a raw display of feeling. For him the experience undammed a reservoir. The change was complete. At the relatively ripe old age of forty-one, he had begun an adult sexual life. He was an eager rather than an accomplished lover, but was capable, she discovered, of deep physical tenderness. Behind his protective screen of brilliant talk, there was a capacity for intimacy that perhaps not even he had suspected.

The affair continued, but he gradually began to transfer his affection toward another woman, Aline Halban, also married to an Oxford colleague, and also with children. She was a slim, sportive, and aristocratic Frenchwoman in her late thirties, born into a distinguished section of the Jewish community of Paris. Just before the war, she had witnessed, in quick succession, the deaths of her sister, a brother, and her young husband. At the age of twenty-four, she was a widow with an infant son in a country being invaded by Germans. In early 1941, she managed to reach America via a boat from Lisbon. Isaiah, returning to New York, had been on that boat. He had noticed a tall, elegant, shy woman and wondered who she was. They met again during the war. He thought, with a certain frisson, that she cut a fine figure. She was considerably less impressed by him: she thought he talked incomprehensibly and looked unprepossessing in a crumpled white suit.

In America, she married Hans Halban, a physicist of Austrian extraction who was working on the Manhattan Project. After the war, Halban accepted an invitation to take up a post in Oxford, and Berlin quickly became a family friend. He made Aline laugh and provided her with a safe and blameless escape from her marriage, which was becoming more difficult by the year.

In the summer of 1953, Isaiah and Aline worked together on a French translation of his essay "The Hedgehog and the Fox." She felt that marriage, the war, and the death of members of her family had left her frozen. Isaiah seemed capable of thawing her out. Still, she could see how different they were. As she once said, "I was Western Europe; he was Eastern Europe."

At the end of that year, Isaiah's father died. He was distraught. As the full force of sorrow and loss began to hit him, he understood that his father had sheltered him, allowing him to remain the adolescent. For the first time, he realized, he was in the "front line"—responsible for his mother, for himself, for his own life, at last. The "abnormality and bleakness" of this situation depressed him deeply.

In an anguished state, he asked Aline to give him a lift into London, so that he could attend a meeting about the disposal of his father's business. On the journey, he told her, for the first time, that he loved her, and he touched her hand. His touch moved

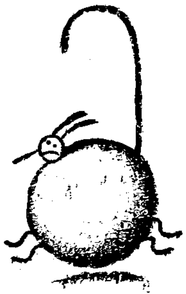
her, but it was unwelcome. She was a married woman with three children, struggling to maintain the façade of a happy marriage. But her unhappiness was such that she began to see him clandestinely. Later, when Isaiah was on holiday, he received a letter from Aline breaking off the relationship. They had been discovered, and Hans Halban had threatened to divorce her and take the children.

Despite her husband's ban, Aline wanted desperately to see Isaiah again. She said she had become a prisoner, and begged him to take her in. They began meeting again, but once more Halban found out. Isaiah was summoned to Headington House, the Halbans' home, on the outskirts of Oxford. As Isaiah remembered it, Halban said, "This is a difficult situation. Let's talk about it." But it was Isaiah who did the talking. He remembered saying, "Look, you're entirely right. Justice is entirely on your side. You're married to her. You love her. There's nothing I can say. I fully understand your position. You needn't expound it to me. There's only one thing I'd like to say. Let me give you a piece of advice. It's not entirely unbiased, as you will see. If you keep someone in prison, the prisoner is more anxious to get out than the jailer is to keep her in. This will not end well. If you stop her from seeing me, this will not go on indefinitely. Sooner or later, it's bound to be broken, even if I do nothing at all."

This urbane disquisition on the psychology of freedom appears to have taken Halban by surprise. He sent Isaiah into the garden to see Aline. Just as she was telling him that she felt sorry for her husband, Halban came into the garden and handed Isaiah a note. It read, "I accept your proposal. You may see her once a week."

That was a drastic measure. The marriage was like a cracked vase, liable to shatter at any moment. At the end of 1954, Hans Halban was approached by the French government and asked to become the head of a new nuclear-physics laboratory in Paris. When he told Aline that he should accept, she refused to go. This was the end of the marriage. Halban left for France having agreed to a separation. Two weeks later, in the Oxford Botanic Garden, Isaiah proposed marriage.

Aline's mother—a grande dame of great vigor and charm—had met Isaiah and liked him, but when her daughter broke the news of their impending marriage she exclaimed, "*Mais il est inépousable.*" Most of Isaiah's friends agreed: he struck them as the most unmarriageable man they knew.



It seemed a revelation to Aline that this middle-aged bachelor should have been able to restore her animation, confidence, and appetite for life. Isaiah wrote an ecstatic letter to his mother, saying, "I am about thirty years younger than I have ever been: *rien à dire.*" When he and Aline sent telegrams to friends or signed joint letters, they combined their names into Isaialine.

Berlin spent the autumn of 1955 lecturing at the University of Chicago. Like a star tenor, he was now drawing large crowds, but although American universities made him flattering offers, his attention was elsewhere. The separation from Aline was painful—she was shuttling between Oxford and Paris, to complete the divorce—but it gave both of them time and space to reflect. To his mother he confided that 1955 had been "the most triumphant" year of his life: "I am happily in love. It is an astonishing sensation. . . . To live on a perpetually rising wave of very strong, very calm, very real emotion is a luxury not known to me before."

In a letter to Aline he struck a note of alarm—partly genuine, partly ironic—about his approaching loss of independence. He also pointed out the submerged connection between falling in love and understanding the nature of freedom:

> It is a far stranger transformation of *my* life than of yours: till 45 I lived without knowing this sensation of irrecoverable loss of independence. I am trying to write notes for politics lectures on *why* people think a feeling of necessity *is* freedom. I am certainly tied hand and foot. Am I "unfree"? Is this what political "love" for leaders produces? Is fanatical devotion, violent love = "self realization," or is there some calm deep feeling which is not tied to "images" and goes on in some even, mystical fashion?

On February 7, 1956, at Hampstead Synagogue, he and Aline were married. In July, for their honeymoon, they went to Moscow and stayed with Charles (Chip) Bohlen, the American Ambassador. There was one person he had not told about the transformation of his personal life. Berlin telephoned Anna Akhmatova from a pay phone on a Moscow street. She thought it best if they did not meet. Then he told her that he had married. She received the news in icy silence.

In 1965, he and an Oxford colleague, Maurice Bowra, persuaded the university to grant Akhmatova an honorary degree. When she appeared in Oxford that June, Isaiah was shocked to see how she had aged. She had gained weight, and he thought, a little unkindly, that she resembled Catherine the Great. But she carried herself like an empress and delivered herself of her opinions with imperial force. When she arrived outside Berlin's new home and surveyed the splendid lawn, the three-story Georgian building, and Isaiah's new wife, she observed, caustically, "So the bird is now in its golden cage." The spark that had leaped between them twenty years before was extinguished. He could only secure her the recognition in the West which was her due; she could only acknowledge it with regal hauteur.

Akhmatova died less than a year later. But she continued both to haunt and to inspire Berlin. His finest essay, "Meetings with Russian Writers," and one of the last extended essays he wrote, was devoted to retelling the story of his meeting with her. And traces of her can be found elsewhere in his writing, even when she is not mentioned by name. In 1953, when he delivered his fierce polemic "Historical Inevitability," one of his most important works, he was animated by anger at the Marxist belief that individuals were powerless before the forces of historical change. Individuals *could* stand up to the forces of history, he argued, and he explicitly acknowledged that he had learned this lesson from Akhmatova. She was an imperishable example of how an individual can make history rather than merely endure it. And in the process she had helped him find his own voice as a defender of liberty. ♦

ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

LAUGH RIOT

What happens when a newcomer tries to bend the rules of the most venerable and conservative of cultural forms—the American sitcom?

BY TAD FRIEND

IN a large white office at the Walt Disney Studios, in Burbank—an office that falls under the bashful gaze of the seven dwarfs who adorn the pediment of the corporate headquarters across the way—four men are brooding about art, commerce, and the fate of their television show. It is a late afternoon in mid-July, and the show's creator, Aaron Sorkin, sits at his desk smoking a Merit and sneaking glances at the computer screen, where the script of his second episode awaits him. Three of his colleagues slouch gloomily on nearby couches. ABC, the network that will air their situation comedy, wants it to be filmed in front of a live audience and to have a laugh track. To Sorkin and the others in the room, a laugh track represents all that is truckling and mediocre about television and would destroy their show. Sorkin told me, "It feels as if I'd put on an Armani tuxedo, tied my tie, snapped on my cufflinks, and the last thing I do before I leave the house is spray Cheez Whiz all over myself."

The show, "Sports Night," which débuts on September 22nd, at 9:30 P.M., is about six producers and anchors of a late-night sports-highlight show that resembles ESPN's "SportsCenter." Some of the best sitcoms have been about the world of television—"The Mary Tyler Moore Show," "The Dick Van Dyke Show," "The Larry Sanders Show"—but Sorkin intends an unusual mixture: runs of banter intercut with serious, and even solemn, moments. In the first episode, Casey, one of the anchors, is getting a divorce and is contemplating quitting the broadcast, because sports has become a greedy and violent business; in a later episode, a female character named Dana, the producer of "Sports Night," reveals finely nuanced crises of conscience about how to broker, publicize, and conduct an interview with a star football player who just exposed himself in the locker room to the show's young female reporter.

It's because of this mixture that the network has been so insistent on the reassuring overlay of "audience response" sounds. As Jamie Tarses, the president of ABC Entertainment, explained to me in June, "The show starts off confusing viewers." Though Tarses acquired the show and has championed it at the network, she's worried about it. "People will wonder, Am I supposed to think this is funny or serious? People need the comforting aural cue of laughter. It's conditioning."

Sorkin, the writer of the screenplays for "A Few Good Men" and "The American President," had not planned his first foray into television to be a traditional sitcom, but something moodier and more realistic. "In film," Sorkin had told me, "my critics will tell you that nobody hugs the middle of the road tighter than I do, and I do feel comfortable there—you don't watch 'A Few Good Men' and go, 'Wow, this is different!' But, while in any other art form mixing comedy and drama is three thousand years old, in the half-hour TV show it's unheard of." Though Sorkin merely wants to create a well-crafted amalgam of comedy and menschy melodrama—"The American President" on the small screen—the half-hour form is so hidebound that what he proposes is akin to adding contraception to Catholic dogma.

The men gathered in Sorkin's office are by turns defiant and fretful. "The problem with the laugh track is that it makes all television the same," Thomas Schlamme, the show's director, says. Schlamme developed the unorthodox camera style of "Larry Sanders" and directed last year's live episode of "E.R." With his baseball cap, and his glasses dangling on a lanyard, the director is the picture of L.A. cool, but he's also the group's bomb-thrower. " 'Suddenly Susan' and 'Seinfeld' have the same laugh track, though there's not a laugh in 'Suddenly Susan' and there's a thousand in 'Seinfeld.' "

"I'd like to see Jamie and say we don't want the audience," says Tony Krantz, the co-chairman of Imagine Television, which is producing "Sports Night."

"With all respect," says Rob Scheidlinger, an executive producer on the show, "it's too easy for them to say no to you." Krantz needs to maintain smooth relations with ABC's executives if he wants to sell them other shows in the future, and he is by nature a mediator. "There's only one man who has the leverage with ABC," Scheidlinger continues, "and that's Aaron."

Sorkin looks uneasy, and lights another cigarette. A handsome, high-cheekboned thirty-seven-year-old with a mop of dirty-blond hair and rimless glasses, Sorkin is wearing one of his fourteen white Gap shirts and a narrow tie. This is a look meant to evoke the old-photo insouciance of his idol, the playwright and Algonquin wit George S. Kaufman. He says, finally, "I'd like to say, 'Jamie, you have two choices. Put the show on or don't. But if you do, do it our way.' "

"How far are we willing to go on this?" Schlamme asks.

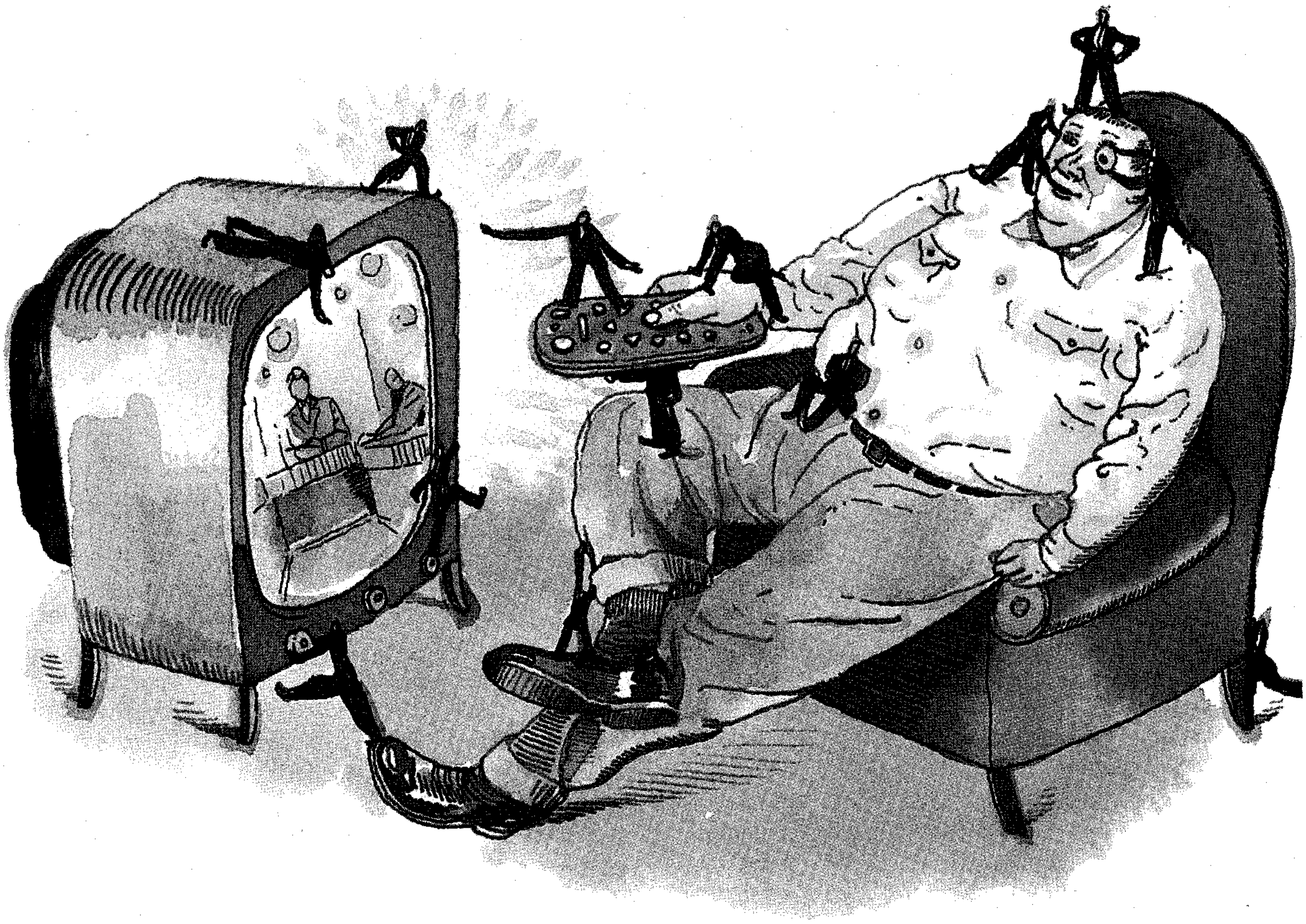
"We're not willing to cancel the show," Krantz says quickly.

"Aren't we?" Scheidlinger asks.

"Well, I think we are," Sorkin says. "I think we have to do this show for thirteen episodes and then be cancelled, if that's what's necessary." There is a silence, and then Sorkin launches into one of his articulate tirades. "The ABC people say they want the audience because it opens up the actors' performances, makes them brighter, but they really just want the two hundred people there so they can tell if it's good—otherwise, they have *no idea*. If I'm a creative person, I'm going to write or direct or act, I'm not going to go work as an ABC exec. The people there do not understand that it's about taking risks, and about taste." Sorkin doesn't necessarily believe this, but it sounds impressive and he's rolling. "And, furthermore, the idea that two hundred people from Canoga Park who have just passed through a metal detector are determining what's funny in television is truly scary."

"What will happen with this audience is that ABC will have control," Schlamme says, his face growing red. "Because the ABC people can see the effect on the audience of what we do. And they get to keep saying 'More Jeremy falling' "—a reference to the show's brainy but bumbling associate-producer character. "And 'Make Jeremy bigger, more laughs. More, more, more!' That's not the show I signed on to do." He looks intently at Sorkin.

Sorkin says, "So this, right here, is the struggle for the soul of 'Sports Night.' " He picks up the phone and calls Tarses's office to make an appointment for the next day. But he's feeling queasy. He fears that Tarses—who pokes fun at the formality of his manners, and who has suffered through a number of his tantrums—doesn't like him. "I'm not good at confrontation," he tells me afterward. "Either I blow up or I cave. And threatening to quit seems like an awfully big bat to use on people you're supposed to be collaborating with."


BARRY BLITT

THERE are three rules for creating a hit network television show. Unfortunately, no one knows what they are. Twenty years ago, NBC's head programmer, Paul Klein, believed that the rules didn't matter, because the only way viewers would stop watching a network show was if you startled them somehow. His "least objectionable programming" theory was predicated on the belief that on any given Thursday viewers tuned in at 8 P.M. for "CHiPs" and kept watching whatever NBC happened to show until bedtime. The trick was not to disturb their reverie: "Thought, that's tune-out, education, tune-out," Klein wrote.

At that time, though, NBC, ABC, and CBS attracted ninety-one per cent of the prime-time viewers. Today, with the roaring growth of cable and the newer networks—Fox, Warner Bros. (the WB), and United Paramount Network (UPN)—the big three are drawing only forty-seven per cent. "Historically, the business was about 'flow,' " says Don Ohlmeyer, the president of NBC, West Coast, referring to the belief that viewers would unhesitatingly flow from one show to a similar one in the next time period. It doesn't work that way anymore: he cites network research showing that less than fifty per cent of the people who watch "Friends" on Thursdays on NBC at 8 P.M. are still watching NBC when "E.R." appears at 10 P.M. "Today, it's about appointments," Ohlmeyer goes on, meaning that remote-clicking viewers will only schedule time to watch their favorite shows. "All twenty-two prime-time hours have to be appointments, and each half hour has to be an appointment. There is no 'the audience' anymore."

The traditional broadcasters worry that if they don't figure out some way of recapturing the audience from such edgier pleasures as "South Park," on Comedy Central, they'll become known as the county fair of the information age—as the antiquated place you visit twice a year to catch the Academy Awards and the Super Bowl. Recently, the networks have begun to ask themselves a novel question: What if we take a stab at the fresh, the daring, the alternative? Not long ago, NBC's Entertainment president, Warren Littlefield, gave all his executives granite stones engraved with a single word: "Risk."

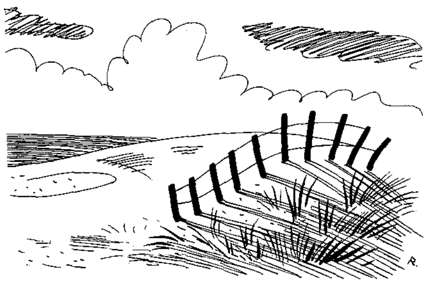
Two years ago, the imperative to take risks led ABC to hire Jamie Tarses, then thirty-two, away from NBC, making her the first woman to head a network entertainment division. (The largely male Hollywood establishment still scrutinizes her pin-striped but playful demeanor for signs of hauteur or "female" logic.) Tarses, for her part, upheld the network's new credo last fall when Sorkin was pitching "Sports Night" to her. "The greatest thing about you is that you don't know the rules—we don't want you to follow the TV handbook," she told him. "TV is about the writer, and we're executives. Our job is to let you succeed or fail wildly."

Traditionally, ABC had done neither. For most of the past decade, it has been the family network, known for shows like "Growing Pains" and "Full House." But last year it fell to third place in the ratings among eighteen-to-forty-nine-year-old viewers—for the first time, it lagged behind even the upstart Fox—and so throwing away the TV handbook started to sound smart. The ABC Entertainment chairman, Stu Bloomberg, a shy man with a soul spot and a dot of a beard, told me that the ABC of the future will be defined by distinctive shows like "Sports Night," and by the network's ubiqutious, bright-yellow we-love-TV ad campaign. "Hopefully, this fall our programming has caught up to the campaign," Bloomberg said. It's a curious idea—trying to program to match the standard of your ads, rather than vice versa. It's an even more curious one, given that the thrust of TBWA Chiat/Day's campaign is to provoke a blanket nostalgia for the pre-cable world of indiscriminate viewing. ("TV, so good, they named a frozen meal after it.")

"Sports Night," as it happens, came straight out of cable's sensibility. Several years ago, Aaron Sorkin was living at the Four Seasons Hotel in Beverly Hills, writing "The American President" through the night. "I kept the television on for company," he says, "and it was tuned to ESPN's 'SportsCenter.' There was this rotating group of anchors whom I liked—they knew a lot, and didn't suffer foolishness. I wanted to be part of that family." The subject of sports isn't particularly suited to a TV series, but likable characters who like sports are. "Creating a friendly environment that people want to be part of is TV," Sorkin says. Specifically, it is a TV sitcom: hour-long television shows usually take you on some sort of journey ("The Love Boat"), while half-hour ones encourage you to be happy where you are, with your family ("Roseanne") or your workplace family ("Cheers"). Television encourages brief, fierce loyalties. This is why, as the medium has matured, the sitcom has become its most popular form: there are now more than sixty sitcoms in production.

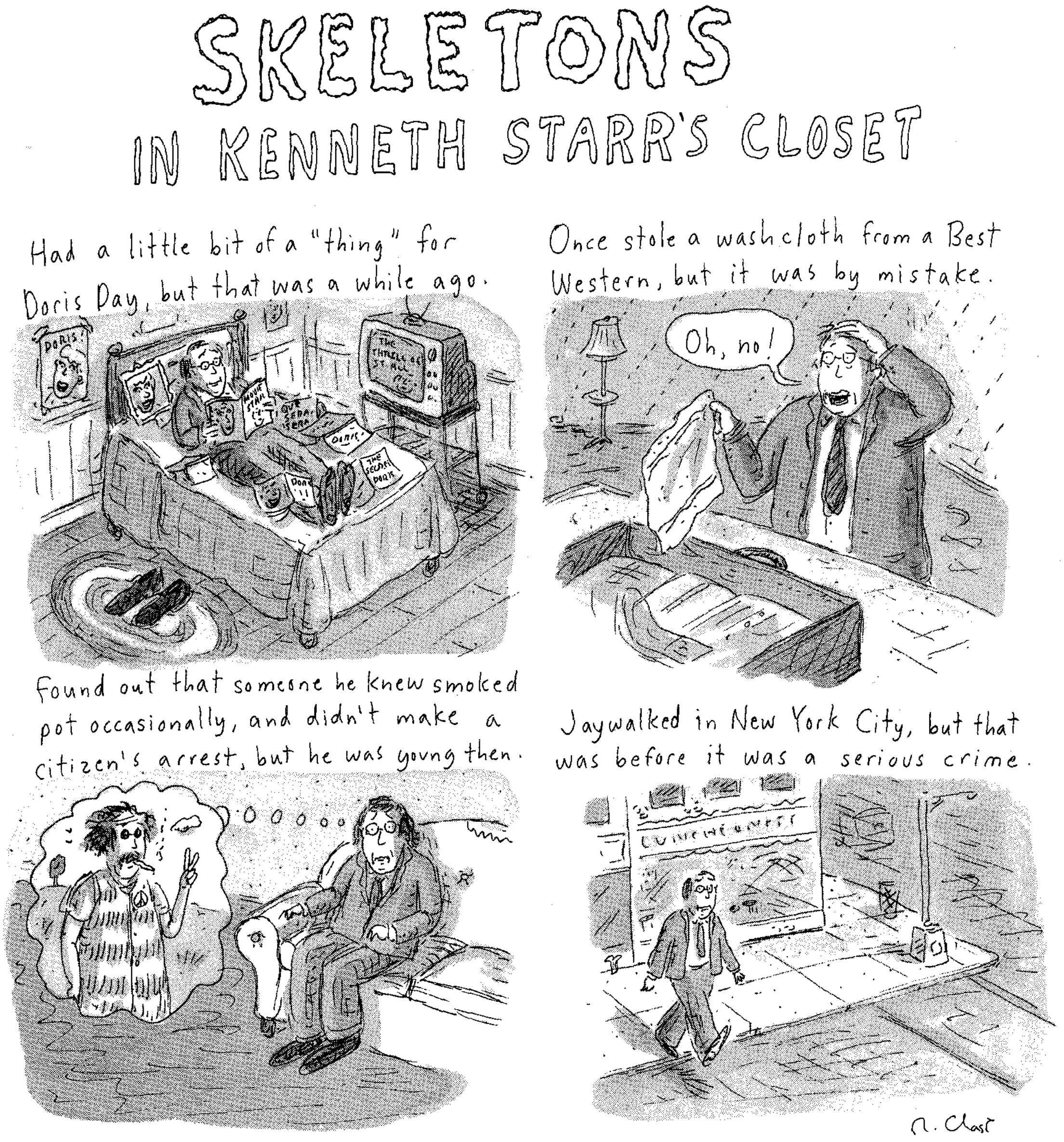
Indeed, in the half century since the first sitcom, "The Goldbergs," aired in 1949, even middling situation comedy—"Family Ties" or "Married . . . with Children"—has become a mainstay of the entertainment economy, earning hundreds of millions of dollars for the network and similar amounts for its creators when sold into syndication. These shows are mass culture—to say nothing of American export product—at its most potent and pervasive, and, often, at its schlockiest. But once in a while a show arrives that actually deserves its gigantic audience and helps imprint a cultural moment, be it the seventies political rants of "All in the Family" or the nineties narcissism of "Seinfeld." Those few we call, generously, classics.

Hoping to create such a classic, Aaron Sorkin took his idea to Tony Krantz's Imagine Television, which is in a joint venture with the Walt Disney Company. Brian Grazer, who is best known for producing such films as "Apollo 13" and "Liar Liar" and is Krantz's co-chairman, often seems restless with his role as intermediary between the "talent" and the "suits." When I had breakfast with Grazer and Krantz last June at the Polo Lounge, Grazer was jittery, his hair sticking up like Alfalfa's. "You're meeting with Jamie?" he asked distractedly. "She probably won't show up." Minutes later, he blurted out, "Aaron's very intense. He has a brittle quality—at the table read, he scared me. He's like an assault weapon!" He glanced at Krantz, who was radiating his usual brown-eyed, Yogi Bear calm. "Maybe I should backtrack on that," Grazer said. Krantz said smoothly, "I think what Brian is referencing is that Aaron was totally focussed, totally on his game."



When I spoke to Krantz later, he was candid about why he took the show to ABC: Disney owns not only the network (which has been willing to pay an unusually generous license fee) and Touchstone Television, which is co-producing the show, but also ESPN. So opportunities for cross-promotion abound. "I'm dreaming aloud here," Krantz said, "but if we prove ourselves, there may be opportunities to promote the show with *ESPN Magazine*, at the theme parks, on 'Monday Night Football.' " I brought up the idea of synergy to Brian Grazer and he laughed. "Obviously, when it comes to time slots or staying on the air, Disney is going to choose its children over other children," he said.

Krantz's first order of business, though, was to introduce Sorkin to the rarefied ways of sitcom development. "Tony would get out a pen and a legal pad," Sorkin recalls, "and say, 'O.K., tell me about the characters. There'd be a producer, right? A girl? And a boss who's a Lou Grant type? And some interns?' He doesn't do that anymore." Sorkin hates to be prodded, and he inveighs against television's schematizing tendency, in which "characters are defined by career goals and libidos—this is the one who works too hard, this is the horny one, this is the gay guy." Yet he also wanted the show to click. By the time he had finished conceiving his characters, they included a producer who was a girl, a boss who was a Lou Grant type, and an internlike associate producer, Jeremy.


SKELETONS IN KENNETH STARR'S CLOSET
Had a little bit of a "thing" for Doris Day, but that was a while ago.
DORIS!
MOVIE STAR
QUE SERA SERA
DORIS
THE SECRET DORIS
DORIS!!
THE THRILL OF IT ALL
Once stole a washcloth from a Best Western, but it was by mistake.
Oh, no!
Found out that someone he knew smoked pot occasionally, and didn't make a citizen's arrest, but he was young then.
Jaywalked in New York City, but that was before it was a serious crime.
R. Chast

More ambitiously, Sorkin planned to challenge many of the rules of sitcom writing, rules that even the best sitcoms often follow. The rules run more or less as follows: shows have an A story and a subsidiary, or B, story (and sometimes a C story as well), which are "broken" across a "teaser" and two acts; scenes should have three laughs to a page; no character can leave a room without saying something funny; and a scene should end with a zinger that sends everyone into the commercial laughing. (For example, two characters ask the boss for a raise, the boss yells and storms out, and one character says brightly, "Well, that went well.") This is the "button," or "blow," to the scene. Sitcom characters also behave in predictably eccentric ways: they sit around three sides of a dinner table (leaving one side for the camera); are always best friends with the people across the hall; spend every night having strangely audible conversations with their friends in strangely uncrowded bars; refer to sex with bizarre euphemisms ("She really rotated my tires!"); speak expositorily on the phone ("I know you're my mother, and you just want to remind me that my brother Jonathan is allergic to cats"); run amok with new responsibilities until they're "drunk with power"; get embroiled in weird misunderstandings and, instead of just explaining the confusion, break into someone's apartment to replace the message they'd left on the answering machine; never do any actual work; often learn lessons that require a group hug; and never watch TV themselves.

Last Christmas, when Sorkin delivered his rule-bending pilot script about a TV anchorman's divorce and gloom, ABC professed delight. Tarses said at the outset, "I'm as excited about 'Sports Night' as I've ever been about a show."

THE network authorized the making of a twenty-two-minute-and-fifteen-second pilot; production expenses—including the building of an elaborate set—eventually mounted to more than a million nine hundred thousand dollars. With real money now at stake, the network's summons to break the rules and go for wild success or wild failure was superseded: a wild failure could cost ABC more than ten million dollars. And so it began to nudge Sorkin toward the rhythms and protocols of network television.

Tarses felt that the story needed a few tweaks. She suggested that Sorkin beef up the part of Dana, the show's producer; Sorkin says that Tarses's "very, very good notes" inspired him to write a crucial scene in which Dana asserts herself. Tarses and her ABC colleagues also wanted Sorkin to take up the hints of a romantic interest between Dana and Casey, the just-divorced anchor: network executives like storylines about smoldering lust.

ABC suggested that James Burrows, a veteran of "Cheers," be hired to direct the pilot, but Sorkin decided on Tommy Schlamme, in part because of his association with "The Larry Sanders Show." Schlamme told Sorkin that the time had come to take the half hour, visually, where Steven Bochco had taken the hour with "Hill Street Blues." In the traditional "four-camera" sitcom, filmed before an audience, the cameras are out in front of the stage and the actors face forward, as if they were in a play. Schlamme wanted to film without an audience, using a "single camera" style, in which the cameras can go deep into the set, getting better angles and also better "eyes," or closeups. The single-camera style feels more like a movie. And it usually doesn't have a laugh track.

By television standards, the sitcom laugh track has deep roots. In 1950, the West Coast producers of "The Hank McCune Show," a series about an inept TV-show host, added the first laugh track because they wanted to replicate the feeling of shows produced with live audiences. Laugh tracks quickly became a bass line underneath jokes, and they reached their peculiar apogee in the nineteen-sixties, when shows such as "The Munsters" featured metronomic guffaws every six seconds. (After the quiz-show scandals of the fifties, CBS, in a strange attempt to regain the audience's trust, put a disclaimer on its sitcoms, declaring that the laughter we were about to hear wasn't real.) In the nineteen-seventies, shows such as "All in the Family" tried to distinguish themselves as more "real" by being "taped before a live studio audience." Then, in the eighties, a number of shows—"The Days and Nights of Molly Dodd," "Hooperman," and "United States," among others—tried to distinguish themselves as completely real by dispensing with the laughter and the audience altogether. Most were bombs; not one was a hit. Shows without laughs can sound dry and feel weirdly unsettling, though the audience often isn't sure why.

Today, when even game shows are "sweetened" with sounds ranging from the "low, warm chuckle" to the "innuendo laugh," the necessity of the laugh track has become an article of faith among network programmers. The pilot for "Sports Night" was made in April, with a laugh track: the producers buckled simply in order to get the pilot on the air, and they planned to raise the issue with ABC again. In an unusual compromise, the show was filmed with an audience on one night, but there were also several days of shooting without an audience. Though the episode was unevenly paced, it was a promising piece of work, and in May ABC announced that "Sports Night" would be on its fall schedule—in a favored time slot, between the network stalwarts "Spin City" and "NYPD Blue."

By now, a pattern had emerged, one familiar to countless television writers: the more promising Sorkin's work was, the more the network had at stake, and the more it had at stake, the more inclined it was to favor time-tested formulas over the innovations of a television neophyte like Sorkin. ABC wanted the show to be funnier and the characters to be more distinct from one another (a directive that can easily lead to the creation of sitcom "types"). To that end, they prevailed upon Sorkin to hire Tim Doyle, previously the head writer for the ABC shows "Ellen" and "Grace Under Fire," and his two writing partners, all of whom were under contract to Disney. (Two other Disney writers were also pushed Sorkin's way.) "There's a lot of money involved here, and a lot of ambivalence about what Aaron has done, so Disney is looking to cover its ass in every possible way," Doyle explains. "They wanted me to be there in case everything turned to shit."

The day before a big laugh-track meeting in June, ABC, as if to insure Sorkin's compliance, presented him with its audience-research findings. A survey of two hundred and eighty-eight viewers who had watched the "Sports Night" pilot found that it tested strongly, at a rating of 160 (100 is average), but follow-ups with four focus groups in Chicago and Atlanta revealed that viewers would not seek out the show, because of the depressing story line, and that Casey was perceived as "whiny and weak." The research department concluded that "viewers need more depth and frequency to the comedy (one-liners were effective to a point) and only want drama used every so often as a tool to give the characters more dimension."

Many classic sitcoms—including "The Dick Van Dyke Show," "M*A*S*H," "Taxi," and "Seinfeld"—tested poorly or had a chilly initial response from viewers. Testing rewards the nice, the familiar, not the fresh or ironical. Nonetheless, after staring at ABC's data, Sorkin had a difficult few days. "Everything untraditional was seen as fatally bad," he told me, with his usual passionate hyperbole, "and the gist of the research seemed to be that I should consider myself extremely lucky that ABC had ordered thirteen episodes, and that any further departures from the norm would end my participation in the show."

The other networks were following Sorkin's laugh-track battle with a more than sporting interest. However much the other networks like to see risky ideas succeed (enabling them to follow suit), they prefer to see them fail, because that vindicates the status quo. Don Ohlmeyer, at NBC, told me with a big grin, "I'd love for the show's creators to prevail on the laugh track—it would improve the chances for our show in that slot. Nobody's coming home from work saying, 'Gee, I can't wait to see that new show without the laugh track'—that's just creative caca. So what makes Aaron think he's so right?"

Sorkin and the other producers had naïvely thought that they'd win, because they believed that the show was clearly better without laughs. Then came the big June laugh-track summit in Stu Bloomberg's corner office, where—as Sorkin and others present recall—it became apparent that the network's position was unyielding.

"You delivered a pilot with a laugh track, and we bought it," Bloomberg observed. "Now you're trying to pull the rug out."

Tarses brought up "M*A*S*H," a show

FULL CIRCLE

In 1982, while a dance student at N.Y.U., the Belgian choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker gave the first performance of her "Violin Phase," a mysterious and austere solo work set to a Steve Reich composition. Sixteen years and more than three hundred performances later, "Fase" (the solo plus three duets, performed with Michèle Anne De Mey) has claimed a place as a sneaker-clad masterwork; its simple repetitive movements—turning, kicking, looking aside—change, almost imperceptibly, into concentrated glimpses of character. De Keersmaeker thinks of it as an attempt "to do the maximum with the minimum—a big economy of means." This week, at the Kitchen, she and De Mey perform the complete work for the last time. "I wouldn't call it coming home," the choreographer says. "It's more like closing the circle."

Photograph by Max Vadukul

Pass or run? Pass or run? Pass or run?
DE-FENSE! DE-FENSE!!
SEXUAL ARENA FOOTBALL

whose sensibility Sorkin had said he'd like to emulate, and pointed out that it had a laugh track. Sorkin groused, "Yeah, but Larry Gelbart"—the show's co-creator—"didn't like it very much."

"The show ran for eleven years," Tarses said reasonably. "So the laugh track sure didn't hurt."

An hour after the meeting ended, Sorkin called Bloomberg and Tarses and apologized: "Is there anything I can do to disabuse you of the notion that I think you're jerks?" They laughed. But the mutual unease remained. Tarses told me, "Everything we say to Aaron has the unspoken sentence in front of it 'You're extraordinarily good at what you do—we're in awe of your ability.' And then we say, 'But here's why what you did sucks.' Our criticism is really just suggestions, and a desire to collaborate. I feel badly because Aaron does view it very personally as criticism, and so he causes himself far more pain."

IT was a morning in mid-July, and a group of the "Sports Night" producers were sitting in Aaron Sorkin's office scarfing Doritos and peanut M&M's and talking about the prospects for their show. Slumped on chairs and couches were Sorkin, Schlamme, Scheidlinger, and Tim Doyle. Doyle, a hulking man with a salt-and-pepper beard, was dressed in the TV writer's uniform: jeans and an unbuttoned flannel shirt over a T-shirt. This was also the male adolescent uniform in 1978, when many current TV writers were watching a lot of TV, which may not be a coincidence.

The topic of the moment was what kind of language you could get away with on television. The networks are trying to appeal to the young and hip with controversial words and scenarios while trying not to alienate Middle America or affiliate owners, many of whom are conservative and religious. Sorkin gets weekly memos from the standards-and-practices department telling him, for instance, that "the use of 'hell' and 'damn' is excessive and must be reduced by 1 to 2."

"You can now say 'penis,'" Doyle informed the intensely curious men. "You can say, 'Put your penis in your pants.' You can't say, 'Suck my penis.'"

"What about 'playing with his penis'?" Schlamme asked.

"Maybe."

"What did you get away with that surprised you?" Sorkin asked.

"'Asshole.'" (He was referring to a pilot that has not yet aired.)

Sorkin was outraged. "You got 'asshole' and we didn't get 'son of a bitch'?"

He was even more upset about ABC's proposed ad campaign for the show. The network memo had proposed "testimonial tease spots (male/female POV)"—men declaring that they like the show's sports angle, and women saying that they like its relationships. This struck everyone as formulaic. "Doing these ads is hard," Sorkin said, at his usual rat-a-tat-tat pace. "It's the Sunday crossword." Sorkin had proposed a spot in which actors playing ABC admen sit around trying to come up with a campaign for the show. Tarses quickly rejected his idea, but Sorkin and Doyle now traded cheesy lines that the actors might say: "Could we have a sassy black neighbor?" "We've had a lot of success with funny aliens." "We have a relationship with Fran Drescher—you could use her."

"What you'll be appalled by," Doyle said, "is that they'll do a twin shot of Michael J. Fox falling off the bed and getting his head stuck in the toilet"—on "Spin City"—"and Jeremy falling off the chair, and they'll say, 'Two, two, two times the fun, Tuesdays on ABC.' They'll sell the least desirable aspect of the show."

"What kind of veto power do I have over these ads?" Sorkin asked.

"You have as much power as you assume," Doyle said serenely, "but it's ABC's show, and it can do what it wants."

"You mean it's ABC's air," Sorkin said. "It's not ABC's show."

Doyle cocked his head and smiled slowly. He said, "You don't have any real power, but you have leverage—they can't do the show without you."

This sort of griping is endemic to television writers, yet Sorkin seems to require an enemy even more than most. His friend Warren Beatty, who has high praise for his abilities, says, "I'd like to see Aaron become the head of a network"—he laughs—"so that his vestigial patricidal instincts are quelled. It's nice to put the problem off on someone, but he needs to learn that the creator is his own enemy, that the enemy is fatigue and stupor and cliché." Today, Sorkin felt that the enemy was the rule book: "I'm trying to discourage the writers from their sitcom instincts, from having all the characters on our show hang out at the local bar," he told me, after the others had left. "Every writer's script has a 'My God, you're the greatest,' tear-welling-up moment about another character, and we've got to pull them all out."

Later that morning, the group returned and one of the writers, Paul Redford, came into Sorkin's office to ask for help with the C story in his script. "You don't have to talk about A story and B story and C story," Sorkin said, blowing cigarette smoke and starting to speechify. "That's a language imposed on us by network people, like 'back story' instead of 'exposition.' It's bullshit. We need to be a bit more magical."

Doyle sang out, "Maybe we can call them 1 story, 2 story, and 3 story."

Afterward, Redford said quietly, "People always say they're going to blow away the rules, but it's a pretty rigid format." Indeed, Sorkin's own "Sports Night" scripts have classic A and B stories. What makes them distinctive is that he doesn't bait for laughs by doing setup lines and making jokes as much as by stringing together garlands of dialogue in which a phrase wends sinuously throughout. One character in these scenes is typically passionate about his or her agenda, and another is inattentive or just barely hanging in there. In the second episode, entitled "The Apology," the sports show's senior associate producer, Natalie, huddles with Casey:

NATALIE: I may have certain feelings for Jeremy.
CASEY: Ah.
NATALIE: I think it's possible that I have feelings.
CASEY: O.K.
NATALIE: I think these feelings could interfere with my judgment as far as his work is concerned.
CASEY: I admire your professionalism.
NATALIE: These feelings have been growing inside me, like a rush or a surge of—
CASEY: This is probably a little more than I need to know about the—
NATALIE: Fine.

Often Sorkin's scripts pivot on a scrap of dialogue in a way that suddenly introduces a confrontation, a cri de coeur. In this same episode, the other anchor, Dan, is in trouble with the network because *Esquire* has written about his support for legalizing marijuana. Forced to render some sort of apology on the air, Dan unexpectedly apologizes to his younger brother, Sam. He explains to the viewers that Sam died eleven years ago in a car crash, because he was high on the marijuana he'd seen his brother so often smoke. Haltingly, Dan says, "I'm sorry, Sam. You deserved better in my hands." It's an unusual region of the human heart for a sitcom to probe.

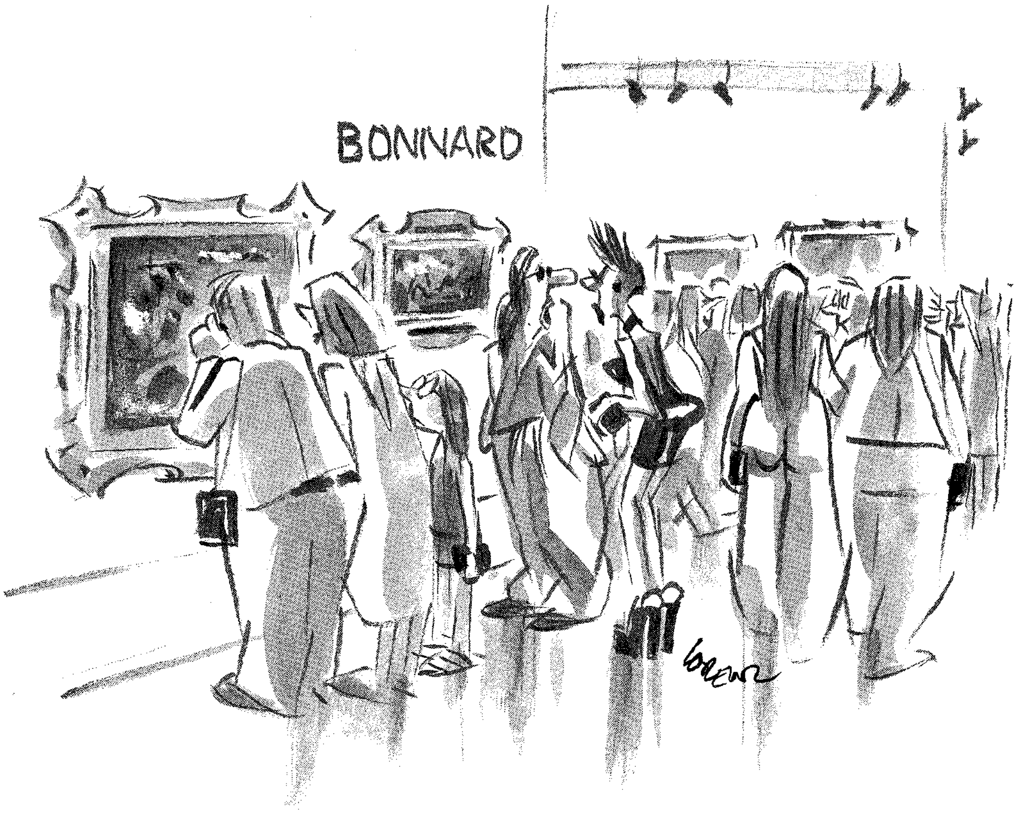
A few days earlier, ABC had told Sorkin that it loved the script, and he was, briefly, jaunty. "It's unusual for half-hour television," he said. "Ordinarily, a show about drugs is a 'very special' 'Home Improvement,' in which the parents find a roach clip in Timmy's bedroom and give him a talking to. Still, ABC's response was so amazed. I feel like a guy who goes to a desert island full of natives and pulls out a cigarette lighter and flicks it, and they think he's a god!"

The night before Sorkin was supposed to have his final laugh-track showdown with Jamie Tarses, the producers and stars of ABC's shows had the promotional duty of mingling with ABC executives and television critics from around the country at a cocktail party, in the Horseshoe Garden of the Ritz-Carlton in Pasadena. It was a Thursday in mid-July, and a swing band played "Me and Julio Down by the Schoolyard" as half-sozzled critics sought out the Olsen twins beneath clusters of yellow "ABC" balloons. Meanwhile, the producers of "Sports Night" began a series of skirmishes with the network's executives.

Sorkin and Schlamme cornered Carolyn Ginsburg Carlson, ABC's senior vice-president of comedy programming, near a bed of ice stacked with glistening shrimp to ask again why she favors a laugh track. Carlson, a petite woman in an elegant white suit, glanced nervously up at the two men standing before her with their arms folded. "For me, the real issue isn't the laugh track but the audience—that's what we want," she said. "The night when we were shooting the pilot with an audience was the first time I saw the actors smile. It makes the actors more *generous*."

Sorkin muttered, "If they argue for an audience, they get a laugh track, too, without having to argue for it."

"I'd rather give up the eye candy," Carlson went on, referring to Schlamme's



"Comfort food for the eyes."

panning and Steadicam shots, "and focus on the relationships."

"I'm not arguing because I want my visual stamp on the show," Schlamme said, with a forced smile, "but because this guy"—he tossed a thumb toward Sorkin, who had gone off to brace Stu Bloomberg on the same topic—"wants this show to feel real."

"I believe you can have proscenium shows that feel real," Carlson said, using shorthand for the way four-camera shows resemble a stage play.

"Really?" Schlamme said. "Which ones?"

"Well, you're probably going to laugh at me," she said, uncertainly, "but 'Friends'—I believe in those characters. And 'Spin City'—that's a world I believe in." Schlamme looked at her, politely incredulous. "Maybe we can try it your way," Carlson finally said. "But we'd only be doing it because we respect you and want you to be happy."

As the party was winding down, at about ten-thirty, Sorkin took Jamie Tarses aside for an intense conversation in a corner of the hotel's great green lawn. Afterward, he didn't speak until he and his wife, Julia, were in their black Range Rover, driving home. "I got hosed, I got hosed," he said at last, as the car crept down the 110 Freeway. "You married half a man, a fraction of a man. We'll film the show without an audience, and also tape it one night with an audience. There will be a laugh track."

"What happened?" Julia asked.

He sighed. "We talked about our relationship, and why it wasn't better, given that we have a similar sensibility and we're working toward the same end. She confided—maybe she says this to all the executive producers—that of all the new shows 'Sports Night' was the one she cared about. But she said that, because our show is difficult, it needs a laugh track and an audience, so people will watch it and like it." Julia rubbed his arm gently. "And, in truth," he said after a wrenching pause, "there was part of me that agreed with her. Plus I have to believe, based on her success at NBC, that she has stuff in her head about how to make this work that's more credible than what I've got in my head."

"So, it's not your show anymore," Julia said sadly.

"No . . . it's still my show," Sorkin said, slowly, as if he were trying to persuade himself that there was honor in retreat. "I decided to give in so we could win the next battles—about promotion, and about keeping us on the air when we're in ninety-eighth place."

Next morning, the "Sports Night" office was downcast. "Aaron's inexperience in television hurt him," Tim Doyle told me. "You have to spend that capital, because no one gives you credit down the line. If the show fails, they still blame you."

Scheidlinger and Schlamme sat with Sorkin in his office and did a bleak post mortem. "I couldn't sleep, because I was thinking, What a waste!" Scheidlinger said. "The half hour is sick, they're trying to invite in new talent, to revitalize it, and then they hobble you."

Sorkin said, in a low voice, almost to himself, "I hope Jamie will respect my having given in, and feel she owes us one."

"Never happen," Schlamme said, looking flushed. "Last night, three people said to me, 'You know, Jamie thinks of "Sports Night" as her baby.' And I was thinking, Oh, no—don't say that. She's a bad mommy."

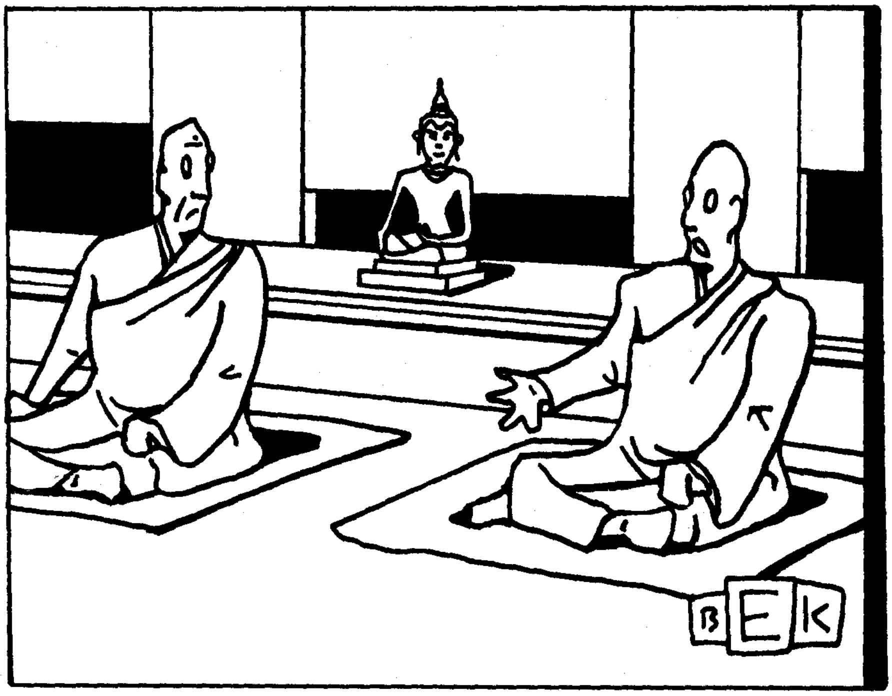
It was 5 P.M. on a Thursday in August: time for the show's weekly audience taping on Disney's Stage Six. Two hundred people were in the stands, and they were watching the pilot episode on the monitors overhead. This is meant to introduce them to the show; it is also meant to rev them up for hilarity.

Josh Malina, who plays Jeremy, the klutzy associate producer, stood offstage near a table heaped with fruit and pastries. "Laugh, monkeys, laugh," he murmured, touching the pancake makeup on his nose; he could tell from the crowd's gleeful chortles that this was the point in the pilot tape at which Jeremy falls off a chair. Like all the actors, he'd prefer not to have to project his lines to the stands between two days of pitching them more intimately toward the camera. "I don't know why they come," he said. "All they'll see is an inscrutable play."

After the pilot concluded, the warmup comic introduced the cast members, and then Tommy Schlamme ordered the actors to their places. The set is huge and unusually authentic-feeling. It has six different three-sided rooms,

"I've got to know, Beverly. Is there another attorney?"

including a studio packed with fifty television monitors, which run video feed of sports footage. “And . . . action!” Schlamme said, facing the newsroom, where the first of the episode’s fifteen scenes is set: Casey and Isaac, the Lou Grant-like boss played by the former “Benson” star Robert Guillaume, are watching a football game. Schlamme kept his eyes on a quartet of monitors that showed the feed from cameras A, B, C, and X, and, below, the feed when the fifth, handheld Steadicam was used for tracking shots. Schlamme asked for a second take. The audience laughed harder than it had before. On the third take, though, the laughs were desultory. This pattern is predictable: according to John Amodeo, the show’s line producer, “The second take always has a bigger laugh—everyone gets it, even the stupid ones. By the third, they’re bored with it, and the fourth has no laugh at all. So the laugh-track guy’s job isn’t to make the show funny—it’s to do a smooth fade of the audience level, reproducing the natural attack and decay of laughter and applause.”



“I’d read so much about it beforehand that I couldn’t help being disappointed when I actually became enlightened.”

Curiously, none of the people in the stands were looking at the stage in front of them: they were all watching the monitors overhead—watching television. After Scene A was finished, Tony Krantz said to the actors, “Smokin’.”

Sorkin and Scheidlinger sat in black directors’ chairs at the front of the stage, with their backs to the action, listening on headphones and watching another bank of monitors. ABC’s Carolyn Ginsburg Carlson and her deputy hovered nearby, and they occasionally whispered to Sorkin: Carlson often wanted the actors to smile more. Peter Krause, the lithe actor who plays Casey, came over to Sorkin to ask for guidance after having given a smirky spin to a line about how his wife used to do up his tuxedo studs. Sorkin didn’t mention smiling: indeed, he had told Krause earlier, “You were mind-fucked and bitch-slapped with all those notes from the network during the pilot. We’ll shield you from notes like ‘Smile more.’ This is not a high-school play.” Instead, Sorkin, a former actor, did the line for Krause—“I used to have a wife for that”—giving it a small, bewildered shrug. As Krause walked back, Sorkin raised his voice and added, “Don’t make a meal of it”: he hates any wallowing in emotion, mugging. In the next take, Krause repeated his sitcom smirk, and Sorkin grimaced.

By the third week of August, with only a month remaining before the show aired, everyone’s baseline nervousness had risen. ABC had done “awareness” and “intent to view” tracking to try to determine how many people noticed its ad campaigns and how many planned to watch its shows. “Sports Night” fared poorly on the “awareness” tracking and extremely well on “intent to view”—meaning that few knew about the show but those who did planned to check it out. “I would hope that we’re going to be patient, if it doesn’t come out of the box,” Stu Bloomberg told me later that week. When I remarked that, since he was the network’s entertainment chairman, the decision was pretty much his, he scowled. “I *want* to be patient,” he said. “But you don’t want to give ‘NYPD Blue’ a terrible lead-in. You can never look at a show in a vacuum, or your affiliates will be on you.”

I also spoke with Jamie Tarses that day. “So much of what happens to ‘Sports Night’ has to do with ‘Spin City’ and how well it does against NBC’s ‘Just Shoot Me,’ which had a hell of a summer,” she told me. “That’s what September 21st brings—an inability to control anything in your life. And the stakes are so high! Half a share point means a difference of millions of dollars. It’s so easy to fail, and if you fail one too many times your reputation is at stake. So decisions get made out of fear. Fear from agents, fear from producers, fear from us. It’s hard to fight it. There are too many shows I developed this year that I’m quite enamored of, and the odds are that many of them will fail.” Curled up on her office couch, she smiled gamely. “You have to say to yourself, ‘All the kids are a little bit sick, so you can’t be surprised when some of them die.’ ”

The sick-ward anxiety was apparent during a Tuesday-afternoon “network run-through”—a dress rehearsal of sorts. The show’s writers and producers and the top ABC executives had come to the set in Burbank to shuffle around in a herd following the actors as they played each scene; it was the last chance for the network to weigh in before filming began on Wednesday. In this, the third episode, Casey expresses growing interest in Dana, and Jeremy gets ill after he sees a mother deer shot while he’s producing a hunting show. In the last act, Jeremy delivers an impassioned three-page speech against hunting, which ends with his comparing hunting in Indian culture to what they have just done: "It wasn't food and it wasn't shelter and it sure wasn't sports. It was just *mean*."

William H. Macy, the actor, who is the husband of Felicity Huffman—Dana on the show—marvelled to his wife, "That's a great speech Josh has. I'm a hunter, and I think it's all liberal horseshit, but it's a great speech."

Huffman said, "Hey, Stu Bloomberg was laughing earlier." She caught herself: "Isn't it terrible how we rate the scripts on whether the network guys laughed?"

After the run-through, the producers met with ABC's executives in the greenroom on the second floor. According to several participants in the meeting, the executives sat on one side of the table, with Disney and Imagine executives and "Sports Night" producers ranged opposite them. Tarses gave the network's notes: the Jeremy story didn't connect with them emotionally, and perhaps the script's three bits of bantery business should be cut to two. Both of these were useful observations, whose gist was that Sorkin left the Jeremy story alone too long in the middle of the show: Sorkin agreed, and later he wrote a new scene to fill the gap. The network also wanted the performances to be brighter. Then Tarses referred to how Jeremy's monologue was followed by another, from Isaac, the boss. "You're asking a lot of the audience to sit through two long speeches," she said. Sorkin, who had been monosyllabic, now snapped, "I often ask a lot of the audience."

"That's all we have," Tarses said quietly. In the silence, Sorkin took a deep breath. "I hate to bring up an unpleasant subject again," he said, "but the laughs aren't working for us." Surprisingly, Sorkin had come to believe that the performances in front of the audience were brighter; he also told me he found that "there are moments in the show where I now get nervous that there aren't laughs." But he and his colleagues still found the laughter on the rough cut of "The Apology" infuriating, and they had decided to plead one last time to be able to shoot the show their way. Sorkin said the episode sounded like an "I Love Lucy" parody, and added, challengingly, "You may not even want to air it because it's so bad."

The long-suffering Stu Bloomberg looked upset, and said that his team couldn't respond to what they hadn't seen. "Why don't you watch it now?" Sorkin suggested. And so the executives trooped into a production room while the producers and Tony Krantz huddled in Sorkin's office. "We're holding their feet to the fire," Sorkin said grimly.

Upstairs, Jamie Tarses was in a gloomy daze. "I'd pretty much stopped speaking since they said we were going to hate the show," she told me later. "I was traumatized, because this show means so much to me. And we were watching, and midway through the second scene somebody stopped the tape, because we were all laughing, and we looked at each other: 'Am I crazy? Isn't this wonderful?' And by the end"—when Dan apologizes to his dead brother, Sam—"I was crying, which is phenomenal."

The executives walked into Sorkin's office with expressionless faces. "Then," Tarses says, "we had to say, 'I'm really sorry, but we *loved* the show.' " They hadn't found the laughter jarring, she went on, because they laughed exactly when the audience did. "In my mind," Stu Bloomberg told me, "that strange moment laid the laugh-track question to rest forever."

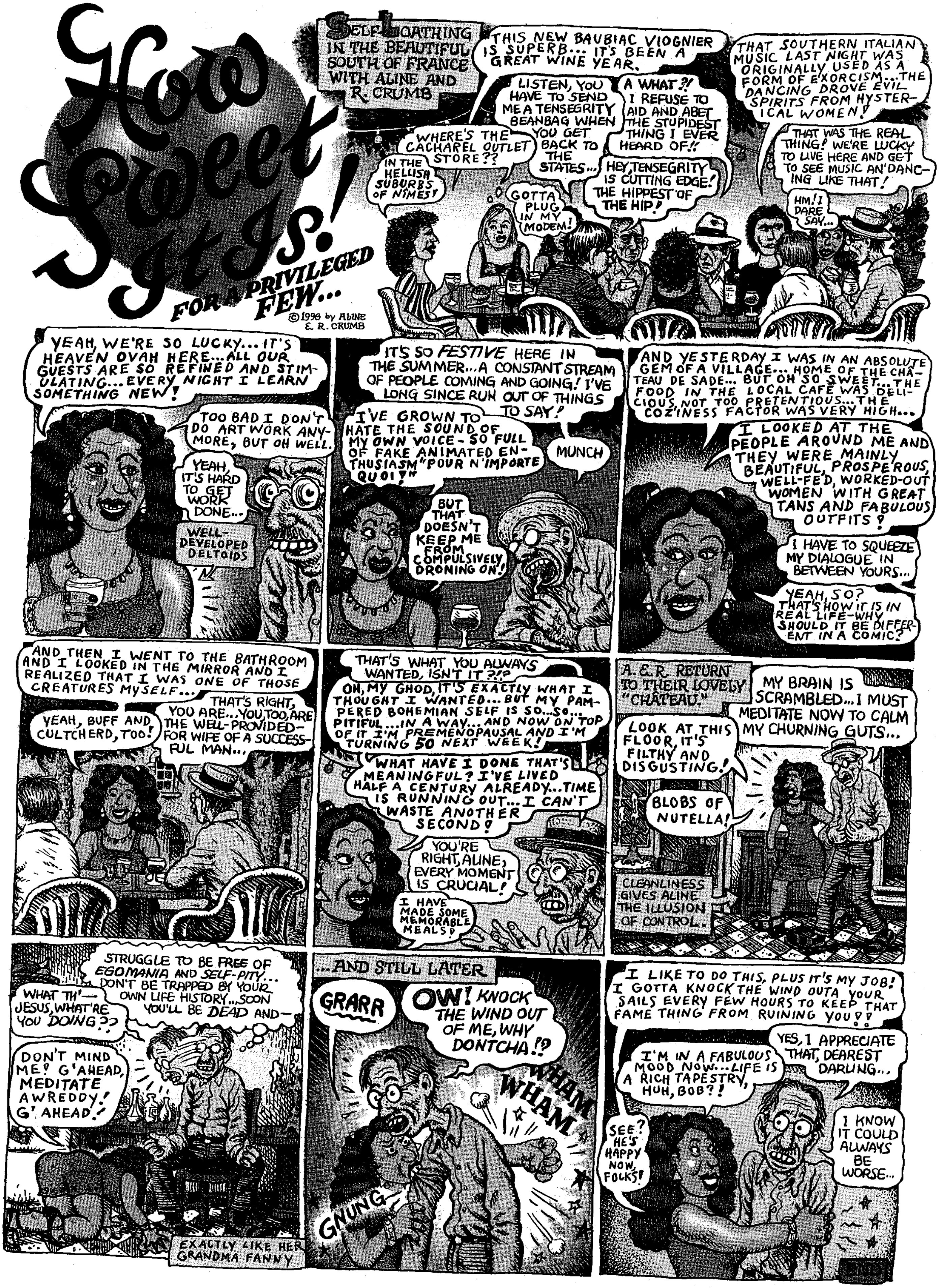
The episode even had Sorkin's version of the sitcom hug: before upbraiding Dan for his initial posturing about marijuana, Isaac says, "Danny, you know that I love you, don't you?" Tim Doyle maintained that the show had joined the sitcom fold. " 'Sports Night' has become a surrogate family—Isaac the dad, Dan and Casey the brothers, Dana the sister. Now it sends the same message as 'Caroline in the City' and 'Suddenly Susan'—single people living in the city can find all the emotional support they want at work. Because of that sentimental message, 'Sports Night' has a chance as popular entertainment." And so ABC finally became convinced that Sorkin knew what he was doing. Three weeks later, Thomas Schlamme would say, "The marriage has begun to work—since that day, ABC has never once said, 'Could you make it funnier?' " At the end of August, with ABC's blessing, Sorkin released the five Disney sitcom writers, including Tim Doyle.

LATER that Tuesday night, over Martinis and crab cakes at the Ivy restaurant, Sorkin and Schlamme talked about the long day. They were sitting outside, at the best table in Los Angeles's renowned power spot, and earlier Garry Shandling had stopped by, with the NBC sports reporter Jim Gray, to wish Sorkin well. But now the restaurant had emptied, and only the waiters and valet parkers still stood at their posts. Sorkin said to Schlamme, "You showed me today how the button on a scene works, and the complete difference in sensibility when you're writing for a laugh track." The scene in question was a trademark Sorkin run, in which the staff debates who wrote the poem that begins "I must go down to the seas again." The names Wordsworth, Byron, and Thoreau are tossed out; Casey insists it's Whitman. Isaac says, "It's not Walt Whitman," and Casey replies, "I'm sayin' I think it's *Slim* Whitman." Dan then tells Dana, with becoming sweetness, "We don't really know who wrote the poem."

Now Sorkin said, "I love Garry Trudeau, because 'Doonesbury' always has another panel after the joke, and that's the way I like to write. That *is* my writing. But you showed me how we have to cut Dan's line, because people are laughing over it. That single cut makes it a different show."

"They're laughing at the rhythm," Schlamme said. "Half of them don't even know who Slim Whitman is." He picked at a crab cake. "One kind of show honors the joke, and one honors the reality. Once you start asking why all these people still live in the same apartment in 'Friends,' then TV falls apart."

Sorkin couldn't help revisiting his struggle with the network one last time—the irony of the executives' telling him that he had succeeded in spite of himself. "Boy, they were really enjoying the fact that it was a checkmate," he said. He lifted his Martini glass and drank, then set it down and subsided into an uncharacteristic silence, looking both pleased and somehow bemused. Today, ABC had welcomed Aaron Sorkin into the sodality of television, a club whose sole membership criterion is that you must no longer trust your instincts about what the audience wants. ♦


How Sweet It Is! For a Privileged Few...
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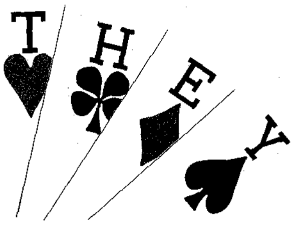
Self-Loathing in the Beautiful South of France with Aline and R. Crumb
THIS NEW BAUBIAC VIOGNIER IS SUPERB... IT'S BEEN A GREAT WINE YEAR.
THAT SOUTHERN ITALIAN MUSIC LAST NIGHT WAS ORIGINALLY USED AS A FORM OF EXORCISM... THE DANCING DROVE EVIL SPIRITS FROM HYSTERICAL WOMEN!
LISTEN, YOU HAVE TO SEND ME A TENSEGRITY BEANBAG WHEN YOU GET BACK TO THE STATES...
A WHAT?! I REFUSE TO AID AND ABET THE STUPIDEST THING I EVER HEARD OF!!
WHERE'S THE CACHAREL OUTLET STORE??
IN THE HELLISH SUBURBS OF NIMES!
HEY, TENSEGRITY IS CUTTING EDGE! THE HIPPEST OF THE HIP!
THAT WAS THE REAL THING! WE'RE LUCKY TO LIVE HERE AND GET TO SEE MUSIC AN' DANCING LIKE THAT!
GOTTA PLUG IN MY MODEM!
HM! I DARE SAY...
YEAH, WE'RE SO LUCKY... IT'S HEAVEN OVAH HERE... ALL OUR GUESTS ARE SO REFINED AND STIMULATING... EVERY NIGHT I LEARN SOMETHING NEW!
TOO BAD I DON'T DO ART WORK ANYMORE, BUT OH WELL.
YEAH, IT'S HARD TO GET WORK DONE...
WELL-DEVELOPED DELTOIDS
IT'S SO FESTIVE HERE IN THE SUMMER... A CONSTANT STREAM OF PEOPLE COMING AND GOING! I'VE LONG SINCE RUN OUT OF THINGS TO SAY!
I'VE GROWN TO HATE THE SOUND OF MY OWN VOICE - SO FULL OF FAKE ANIMATED ENTHUSIASM "POUR N'IMPORTE QUOI!"
MUNCH
BUT THAT DOESN'T KEEP ME FROM COMPULSIVELY DRONING ON!
AND YESTERDAY I WAS IN AN ABSOLUTE GEM OF A VILLAGE... HOME OF THE CHATEAU DE SADE... BUT OH SO SWEET... THE FOOD IN THE LOCAL CAFE WAS DELICIOUS, NOT TOO PRETENTIOUS... THE COZINESS FACTOR WAS VERY HIGH...
I LOOKED AT THE PEOPLE AROUND ME AND THEY WERE MAINLY BEAUTIFUL, PROSPEROUS, WELL-FED, WORKED-OUT WOMEN WITH GREAT TANS AND FABULOUS OUTFITS!
I HAVE TO SQUEEZE MY DIALOGUE IN BETWEEN YOURS...
YEAH, SO? THAT'S HOW IT IS IN REAL LIFE-WHY SHOULD IT BE DIFFERENT IN A COMIC?
AND THEN I WENT TO THE BATHROOM AND I LOOKED IN THE MIRROR AND I REALIZED THAT I WAS ONE OF THOSE CREATURES MYSELF...
THAT'S RIGHT, YOU ARE... YOU, TOO, ARE THE WELL-PROVIDED-FOR WIFE OF A SUCCESSFUL MAN...
YEAH, BUFF AND CULTCHERD, TOO!
THAT'S WHAT YOU ALWAYS WANTED, ISN'T IT?!?
OH, MY GHOD, IT'S EXACTLY WHAT I THOUGHT I WANTED... BUT MY PAMPERED BOHEMIAN SELF IS SO... SO... PITIFUL... IN A WAY... AND NOW ON TOP OF IT I'M PREMENOPAUSAL AND I'M TURNING 50 NEXT WEEK!
WHAT HAVE I DONE THAT'S MEANINGFUL? I'VE LIVED HALF A CENTURY ALREADY... TIME IS RUNNING OUT... I CAN'T WASTE ANOTHER SECOND!
YOU'RE RIGHT, ALINE, EVERY MOMENT IS CRUCIAL!
I HAVE MADE SOME MEMORABLE MEALS!
A. & R. RETURN TO THEIR LOVELY "CHÂTEAU."
MY BRAIN IS SCRAMBLED... I MUST MEDITATE NOW TO CALM MY CHURNING GUTS...
LOOK AT THIS FLOOR, IT'S FILTHY AND DISGUSTING!
BLOBS OF NUTELLA!
CLEANLINESS GIVES ALINE THE ILLUSION OF CONTROL.
STRUGGLE TO BE FREE OF EGOMANIA AND SELF-PITY... DON'T BE TRAPPED BY YOUR OWN LIFE HISTORY... SOON YOU'LL BE DEAD AND—
WHAT TH'— JESUS, WHAT'RE YOU DOING??
DON'T MIND ME! G'AHEAD, MEDITATE AWREDDY! G'AHEAD!
EXACTLY LIKE HER GRANDMA FANNY
...AND STILL LATER
GRARR
OW! KNOCK THE WIND OUT OF ME, WHY DONTCHA!?
WHAM WHAM
GNUNG
I LIKE TO DO THIS, PLUS IT'S MY JOB! I GOTTA KNOCK THE WIND OUTA YOUR SAILS EVERY FEW HOURS TO KEEP THAT FAME THING FROM RUINING YOU!!
YES, I APPRECIATE THAT, DEAREST DARLING...
I'M IN A FABULOUS MOOD NOW... LIFE IS A RICH TAPESTRY, HUH, BOB?!
SEE? HE'S HAPPY NOW, FOLKS!
I KNOW IT COULD ALWAYS BE WORSE...

FICTION

THE STREAK

How long does luck last?

BY TIM O'BRIEN



THEY WON twenty-five hundred dollars before lunch. "We should quit," Amy said, and Bobby said, "I guess we should," but by dinnertime they had won another two thousand.

It was late summer, a weekend. They had been married three and a half days and had stopped at the little lakeside casino on a whim.

"We'll take a room," said Bobby. "Why run away from good luck?"

"Why stay for bad luck?" Amy said.

By midnight they had won fifteen hundred dollars more, taking turns, a blackjack tag team. Amy organized their chips in tidy stacks of black and purple and orange.

"Bet it all," said Bobby. "Six thousand, and we'll go to bed."

They bet it all and won with a pair of jacks and did not go to bed. They bet half their winnings; the pretty young dealer broke on a twelve. Until then, the cards had gone very well, but now it had become a streak.

"Seven in a row," Bobby said. "Put out six thousand."

"If we lose?" said Amy.

"We go to bed."

"For sure?"

Bobby played the hand—a black ace covered by a red queen. There was a warm, dreamy glow at the table; people were stopping to watch, and the pretty dealer smiled at them. "Your turn," Bobby said. "Six thousand again."

"That's too much," Amy said.

"Go on. I believe it's called gambling."

She pushed out sixty black chips. She drew a nine and a four against the dealer's jack.

"Hit it," said Bobby.

"I can't."

"Close your eyes."

She drew a seven. The dealer turned over an eight. Altogether, they had won thirty-three thousand dollars.

"Please, please, please," Bobby said. He was giddy. He put a hand on Amy's hip for good luck, and they won again, another six thousand.

"Very nice," said the dealer, who was twenty-two or twenty-three, slim-hipped, with braided black hair and black eyes and brown skin. She chopped down the cards and shuffled.

"Newlyweds, that's sweet," the girl said. "I get married myself in October—October 1st—except with my luck I'll end up honeymooning in my fiancé's Winnebago." She snorted. "As if I don't already know every square inch."

The dealer's engagement ring, an oversized chunk of glass and turquoise, looked cheap and gaudy against the green felt. Amy tipped her twenty-five dollars.

"What about you?" the girl said. "Big wedding?"

"Pretty big," Amy said.

"Huge, I'll bet. Lucky stiffs like you, I'll bet it was one serious, pull-out-the-stops wedding." The dealer squared the cards and held them out for cutting. "You wear white?"

"Blue," said Amy.

"What was your music?"

"Music?"

"At the wedding."

"Oh, that. Rodgers and Hammerstein. Just one long blur, I'm afraid." Amy cut the cards.

"You should walk," said the dealer, "while the walking's profitable."

"Forget it," said Bobby. "Six thousand again."

"She might be right," said Amy.

"She might be."

They were dealt a six and a ten. Amy stayed; the pretty dealer broke on a fifteen.

"Just my luck," the girl muttered.

Amy tipped her fifty dollars. A crowd had gathered, most of them silent or nearly silent. A man in a plaid sweat suit giggled when Bobby pushed out twelve thousand dollars in orange chips.

"Can't do it," said the dealer. She stared at a spot over Amy's shoulder. "Six thousand—table limit."

"Two hands," said Bobby. "Six each."

"That's a car," the girl said. "Or two real decent used cars." She hesitated. "What I'd do right now, I'd go upstairs and pull back the sheets and start honeymooning."

"Deal," Bobby said.

"I'm nervous," said Amy.

"This is how you win," Bobby said, almost crossly. He tapped the table with the palm of his hand. "Ride your streaks, go where the luck goes."

"But what if... You know."

"Don't think that way."

He kissed Amy's cheek, a half kiss, then looked up at the pretty dealer.

"Play cards," he said.

The dealer broke again. They had won fifty-seven thousand dollars since ten o'clock that morning.

"Christ, I swear, if I only had your luck," the girl said. She pocketed Amy's hundred-dollar tip, closed her eyes, shook her head. "Just once in my putrid life."

She broke the next hand, too.

"Crap," she said.

"Four hands this time," Bobby said. "Six thousand each."

Amy played. She hit a blackjack, a twenty, a seventeen, another twenty. The pretty young dealer broke on a thirteen.

The crowd yelped and applauded.

FILIP PAGOWSKI

"I kid you not," the girl said. "My crummy, crummy luck."

"You're supposed to be rooting for us," Amy said.

"Hey, look, I'm rooting hard, doll. Cute couple. Big, ritzy wedding."

Amy was thirty-six, a lawyer, and did not like being called doll. No one had to prompt her to push out another twenty-four thousand dollars.

"Win or lose," Amy said, "we quit this time."

Bobby said nothing. He cupped his chin in his hands and leaned low over the table. It was a very small, dingy casino, a single square room with a Formica bar and ten blackjack tables and fifty or sixty slots. The customers were mostly locals.

"The thing about a streak," said the dealer, "is that you can use up your luck. Every bit of it—like me. And then there's the rest of your life."

"Which means what?" Amy said.

"Don't listen," said Bobby.

The dealer thumbed the cards. "Waste your luck here, what's left for the honeymoon? What's left for a rainy day in the suburbs?"

"Deal cards," Bobby said.

The girl shrugged and dealt. Bobby won two hands, lost two.

"No damage," he said.

"Please, let's take a break," said Amy. "At least a little break."

"One last shot."

"Yes, but we've made a fortune. We're not here to gamble, are we?"

"You should be happy."

"I am happy."

"You aren't," Bobby said. He gave her a scolding look, as if she were a student in his junior-high algebra class. "People don't get streaks like this. Try to enjoy it, all right?"

"All right," Amy said.

The dealer shifted from foot to foot, eyed a pit boss to her left. The man shrugged.

"Listen to me," the girl said. "Those chips there, that's half a house."

"Now we furnish it," said Bobby.

He played four hands again, six thousand each. The girl dealt him two twenties, a nineteen, a seventeen.

She broke again.

"Fuck," she said, loudly. "What the fuck's wrong with me?"

The pit boss murmured something. The girl nodded and said, "Sorry."

"We'll take a break," Amy said.

She began to put out a tip but then drew it back.

"Drinks on the Chippewa nation," said the pit boss, solemnly, with the inflection of a clock.

At the bar, just after three in the morning, they tallied their winnings.

"How long can it last?" Amy said.

"Not forever," said Bobby. "Sooner or later, I guess, the odds just reach out and grab you by the throat."

"That's the math teacher speaking?"

"Yeah," he said.

"So why not quit?"

"Because I'm a lousy math teacher. Because I'm fifty-one years old."

They looked at each other.

After a second Bobby stood up. He walked to the cage, cashed in, returned to the bar, and dropped one hundred and twenty thousand dollars on the Formica. The bills were crisp and inky-smelling.

"Forty goes to Uncle Sam," he said. He flicked his eyebrows, a gesture that irritated her. "The fun thing now would be to bet it all. Every dime. Thumb our noses at the numbers."

"All at once?"

"It's pure profit. Their money."

"We'll lose."

"Fun, though."

Behind them, a single slot machine made buzzing noises in the dark, harsh and cheerless. Two elderly gentlemen sat dreaming at the end of the bar. The casino was almost deserted.

Amy watched the young dealer.

"That girl, she's lovely to look at," Amy said, "but she wanted us to lose."

Bobby shrugged. "I doubt it."

"What then?"

"It wasn't about us losing. She wanted to win."

"Maybe so," said Amy. "Except dealers aren't supposed to think that way. It's a job, that's all."

"Not for her. Not tonight."

Amy tried to look away—tried to appreciate the stack of cash in front of her—but again, with no active volition, her gaze slipped off toward the dealer. The girl stood alone at her table, arms folded, one hip cocked to the side.

"She is pretty, though," Amy said.

"Give it ten years," said Bobby. "Babies and Winnebagos."

"That's nasty. And you don't mean it."

"I don't?"

"You were staring at her."

Bobby chuckled. "I was staring at Lady Luck."

"Not sometimes."

"When?"

"When she shuffled," Amy said. "I'm gabbing away, you're staring."

"I love you."

"You loved winning."

"Well, yes, that is very goddam true," Bobby said. He handed her a stack of hundreds; he winked and did the irritating thing with his eyebrows. "You should be celebrating."

"Then how come we aren't in bed?"

"Because we're hot."

"That's why?"

"Don't spoil it," he said.

Amy closed her eyes. Why the image came to her, or from where, she had no idea, but suddenly she was picturing the organist at their wedding, a tired old woman in a crêpe dress and crocheted white sweater. Bobby had chosen the music—a medley of show tunes—and something about the music and the tired old organist now gave Amy the creeps. False sentiment, maybe. Or maybe it was the wedding itself, which had also been Bobby's idea, and to which she had assented mainly out of guilt. They had been together four years. He had been decent to her, assiduously decent—decent without flaw—and there was no question about Bobby's patience and humor and devotion and kindness and graying good looks. Her parents had been ecstatic. She truly liked him. And in the end, snagged by their years together, she had run out of excuses.

It was not an issue of love. Amy was thirty-six years old, once divorced, and she no longer expected fairy-tale romance.

"Listen," Bobby said. "What's wrong? Tell me."

"I don't know."

"The money? The girl?"

"I don't know."

They took a walk along the lake outside the casino, in the dark, which felt dangerous with a hundred and twenty thousand dollars in their

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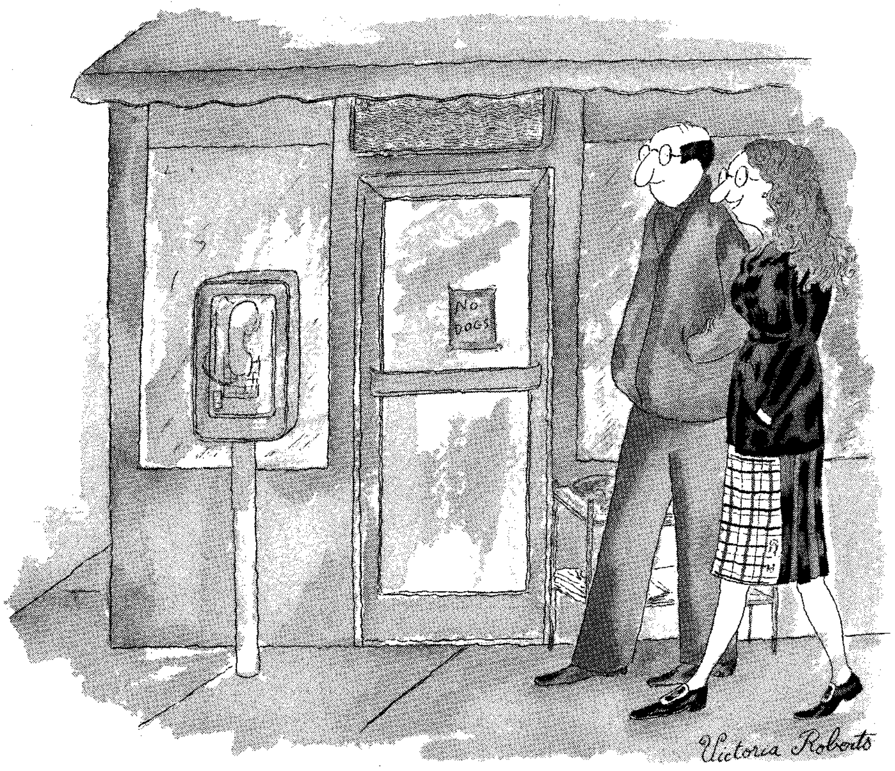

"It's all string theory to me."

• •

pockets. Back inside, Amy said she was going to bed. Bobby could do what he wanted.

A muscle moved at his jaw.

"In that case," he said, "I want to ride the streak. It doesn't mean we're splitting up."

"It doesn't?"

"No."

"Then what does it mean?"

"Stay with me," he said. "Have fun."

"Bobby, it's not fun. Even the winning feels like bad luck. Like we're wasting something."

They were standing at the elevators across from a bank of slot machines. Amy studied the casino. Years from now, she knew, this would all be with her.

"I'm going to bed," she said. "You go wherever."

"You're angry."

"It isn't anger, Bobby."

"What then?"

"Math," she said.

AMY showered, turned on the radio, turned it off, packed her suitcases, sat on the bed, combed her hair, cried, then went out onto a balcony overlooking the lake. Dawn had come. The lake itself was dark, scarcely a lake yet, but she could hear its fluid movements. To the north, over a great woods, the moon seemed shrunken and faraway.

She lay down on the balcony.

Thirty-six years old, she thought. One hundred and twenty thousand dollars.

And then she thought about her wedding day, which had been more or less fine, except for the fact that marrying Bobby, or marrying anyone, had never been high on her list of things to accomplish. A year ago, when she told him yes, it had seemed such a tiny concession, barely an inconvenience. Now, stupidly, she found herself trying to erase the wedding in her head, subtracting things: the flowers and the old organist and the minister and the music and her blue dress, then Bobby, then herself.

One hundred and twenty thousand dollars—what incredible, heartless luck.

For a few moments, eyes closed, Amy imagined him downstairs. Maybe he would fall for the pretty young dealer. Save her from Winnebagos, save himself from whatever this was.

SHE slept for an hour, then dressed and went down to the casino.

Bobby sat hunched over a pile of orange chips. His shirt had come untucked; he had a stale, chemical smell that made Amy back off a step. She watched him draw a pair of kings.

The dealer broke on a sixteen.

Bobby whooped and slapped the table.

"Your hubby," said the young dealer, "officially owns this joint. The man can't lose."

"Can't he?" said Amy.

THEY drove away with just under two hundred and forty thousand dollars in cash. For three hours, heading south toward Minneapolis, Bobby would not stop talking about his good fortune, how for once in his life all the breaks had gone his way, how he could do no wrong, how they had just won themselves early retirement and a Buick and time to burn and maybe even a nice little condo on a golf course in Arizona.

At one point he gave her knee a squeeze.

He laughed and said, "Amazing. Flat-out scalped them. No survivors."

At noon they stopped at a gas station outside the Twin Cities. Amy went inside, bought a Coke, and called a cab.

She had no plan.

Perhaps when the cab came, she would explain to Bobby that it had been a terrible mistake, that she was sorry and wished him well. She wasn't sure yet.

For a while she stood in the doorway, drinking her Coke, watching Bobby explain to the attendant about his streak. Both of them were laughing. It occurred to her that this was a story he would be telling for the rest of his life, for years and years, which seemed an awfully long time.

Amy went into the ladies' room and locked the door.

In a few seconds, no doubt, she would change her mind. She would probably march outside and get into Bobby's car and finish her honeymoon. Stop on a sixteen. Hope for the best. ♦

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THE SKY LINE

NOW ARRIVING

The restoration of Grand Central Terminal is a triumphant validation of an ambitious urban idea.

BY PAUL GOLDBERGER

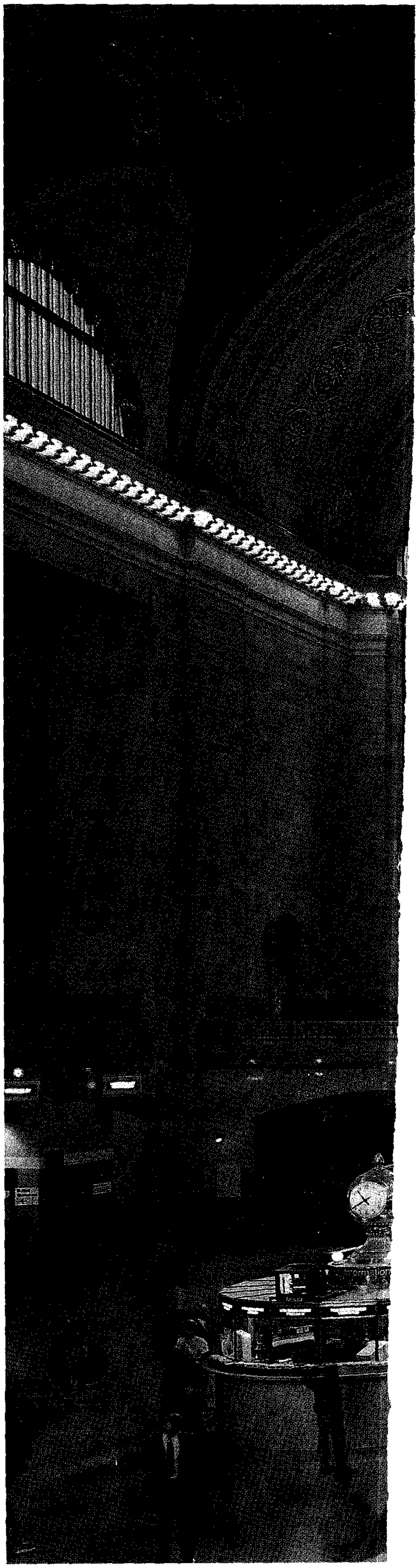
GRAND CENTRAL TERMINAL was never as overpowering or as grandiose as the late Pennsylvania Station, which was torn down in 1965, and that may be why it has survived. It wove its way into the fabric of New York City so subtly and so tightly that it couldn't be ripped out. The real brilliance of the place—for all its architectural glory—is the way in which it confirms the virtues of the urban ensemble. Grand Central was conceived as the monumental center of a single composition, with hotels and streets and towers and subways arrayed around it. When it opened, in 1913, it was New York's clearest embodiment of the essential urban idea—that different kinds of buildings work together to make a whole that is far greater than any of its parts.

If Penn Station was built mainly to send a message about the splendor of arrival, then Grand Central was conceived to make clear the choreography of connection. Railway trains, automobiles, subways, office buildings, hotels—everything that made the early-twentieth-century city a collage of movement—were brought together here, seamlessly. Not that the terminal is a cold-blooded testament to functionalism. The sumptuous Beaux-Arts façade and the great space of the main concourse possess beauty as rich as any to be found in the public realm. But the building was designed with clarity and simplicity. Originally, for instance, long-distance passengers could carry their baggage from Forty-second Street to the train platforms without a single change of level. City traffic wraps around the building on viaducts that eliminate the congestion a huge building in the center of town could cause, and underground pedestrian passageways tether surrounding buildings to the terminal at their center.

John Belle, of Beyer Blinder Belle, the architect who has been supervising the spectacular restoration of Grand Central under the aegis of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, understands completely how the terminal is at once an exalted symbol and a kind of urban operating system, and he has managed to enhance the place on both counts. Thanks to his work and to the M.T.A.'s belated understanding of what Grand Central is, the restoration of the terminal is a triumphant moment in the modern history of New York.

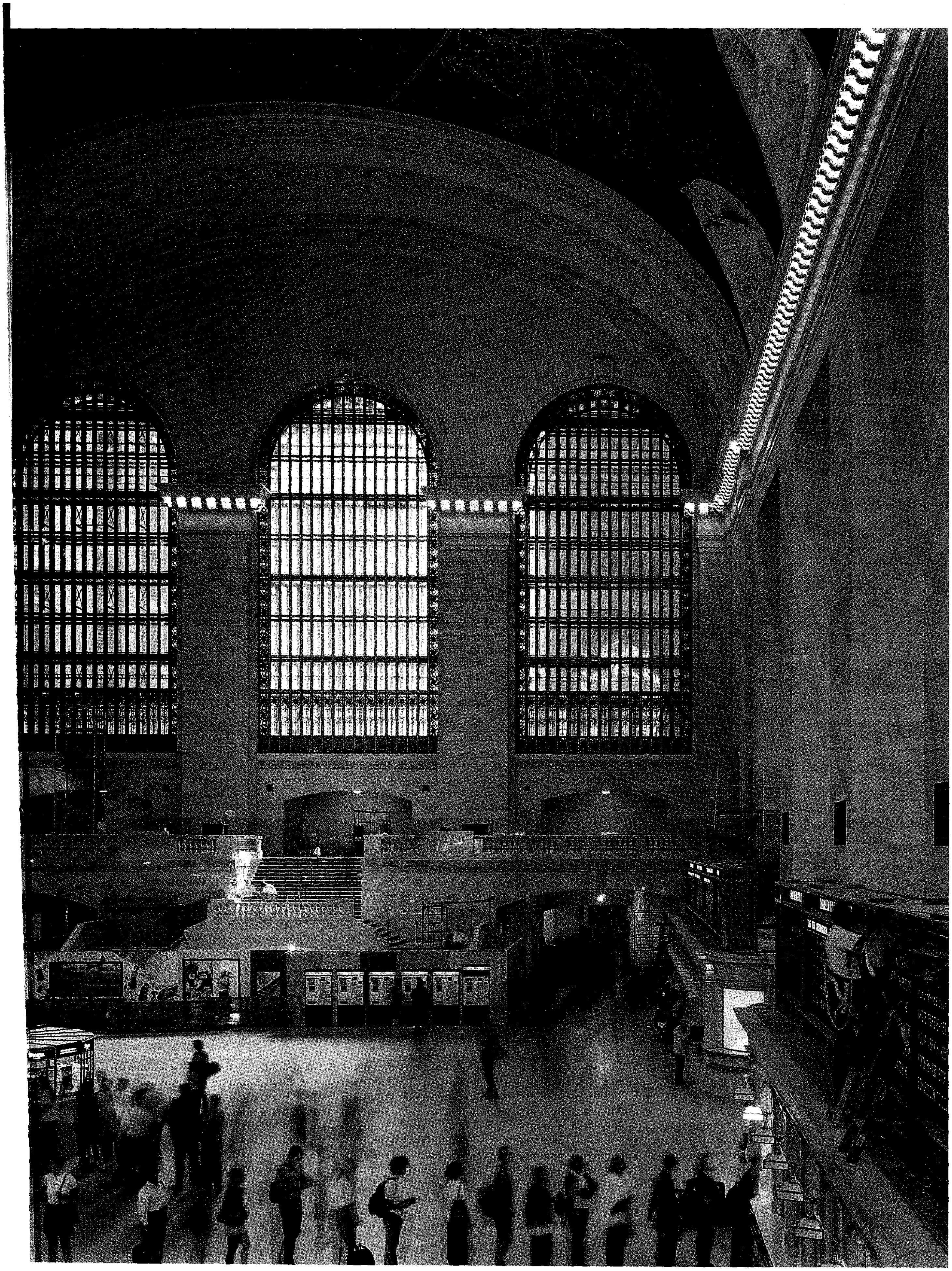
It is also sweet revenge, given that Grand Central was almost lost in the nineteen-seventies, when the struggling Penn Central railroad commissioned Marcel Breuer to turn its financially draining terminal into a paying real-estate proposition by putting a huge skyscraper on the roof. The Landmarks Preservation Commission's decisive rejection of that plan led to a lawsuit that ended up in the United States Supreme Court, the first landmarks case ever to do so. In 1978, the Court ruled that the commission had acted appropriately, thus upholding the right of a city to save its most valued buildings, even if they are privately owned and their land could be put to more profitable uses. Grand Central is the poster building for every landmark in the United States.

WHITNEY WARREN, the gifted and socially well-connected architect who is credited as the terminal's main designer, gave the magnificent concourse its shape and the dignified façade its form, but the real begetter of Grand Central was a figure nearly lost to history—William J. Wilgus, the chief engineer of the New York Central railway



PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT POLIDORI

The imposing new staircase on the east side



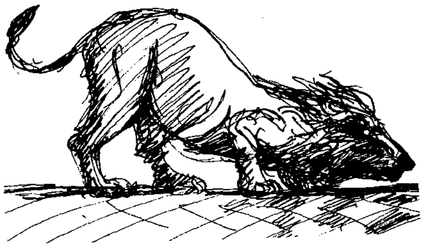
rand Central's main concourse will be the site of a ceremony on October 1st at which the monumental building will be rededicated.

company, the predecessor of the Penn Central. Wilgus enthusiastically promoted the conversion of the New York Central system from the noisy, sooty, and dangerous steam locomotives that were the legacy of the nineteenth century to the electrically powered trains that would prevail in the twentieth. He designed the New York Central's electrification system, and conceived of the duplex arrangement of tracks in Grand Central. He also foresaw the profound implications of the new system. The old-fashioned coal-fired trains let off great blasts of steam and had to be parked outside or in enormous sheds, where the products of combustion would dissipate. Since the new trains could run underground, the conversion to electricity would free block upon block of land for development. Wilgus proposed that the railroad start a realty company to exploit the value of the land above the tracks. He all but invented the concept of air rights. His plan created the modern Park Avenue, a boulevard set on the roof of railroad tracks. Since the blocks south of Fifty-sixth Street were developed by the New York Central—originally that whole area was to be called Terminal City—the buildings there evolved as a coherent group.

Wilgus's ambitious urban plan needed a great building at its heart, and in 1903 the railroad invited several architects to submit designs, including McKim, Mead & White and Daniel H. Burnham. The winner was the firm of Reed & Stem, whose senior partner, Charles Reed, happened to be William Wilgus's brother-in-law. That familial connection was overshadowed, however, by the fact that William K. Vanderbilt, the New York Central's chairman, was Whitney Warren's cousin. The firms of both Warren and Reed were hired. They formed an awkward association, with Reed & Stem's scheme providing the basis for the urban design and Warren designing most of the building itself.

Although Grand Central was created by a private corporation, it turned out to be one of the most ambitious public works in the history of New York. The terminal alone required two and a half times the amount of steel used to build the Eiffel Tower, and cost eighty million dollars, or roughly two billion in today's dollars. Because monumental space was no longer needed to house the trains, the impulse toward architectural grandeur played itself out not in a huge glass train shed but in more usable public spaces like Grand Central's main concourse, which is two hundred and seventy feet long, a hundred and twenty feet wide, and a hundred and twenty-five feet high—longer, wider, and higher than the nave of the Cathedral of Notre-Dame. The project gave twentieth-century form to midtown Manhattan.

MUCH of the strength of Wilgus's urban plan remains visible today, though it has been badly compromised by gargantuanism in the form of the Metropolitan Life Building—the fifty-nine-story slab that was known until recently as the Pan Am Building—and by vulgarity in the form of the Grand Hyatt Hotel, the Trump-sponsored metamorphosis of the Commodore Hotel from dignified order into cheap garishness. In almost every other way, however, Grand Central and its neighborhood have never been in better shape than they are right now. John Belle, who describes his job as "peeling off the excrescences," has spiffed up the terminal to look more elegant than it has at any time since the nineteen-twenties, when the first in a long series of destructive alterations began. But the restoration has brought additions, too, ranging from the imposing staircase placed at the east end of the main concourse to new (and still unfinished) entrances at Park and Madison Avenues that will give commuters direct access to the north end of the underground train platforms. The staircase is the most controversial part of the project, since it is not a restoration. Whitney Warren built a grand staircase at the west end of the main concourse to give access to Vanderbilt Avenue, and proposed a similar staircase at the east end to lead to the lobby of a medium-sized office tower that was contemplated for atop the terminal. When the office tower did not get built, neither did the stairs, leaving an empty and inaccessible balcony at the east end of the main concourse for eighty-five years.



The balcony is now to be used for cafés and restaurants, and Belle reasoned that the most logical thing to do was resurrect the idea for a staircase there, giving the concourse a degree of symmetry it never had. He has designed the new staircase to be almost, but not precisely, the same as the one on the west side. The detailing on the balustrades is very slightly simpler. New stores and restaurants and a lower-level food court have also been added, but discreetly; Belle and the M.T.A. have stripped away most of the advertising signs that for years turned the main concourse into a kind of covered version of Times Square. They have managed the trick of making Grand Central look virginal while making it more commercial.

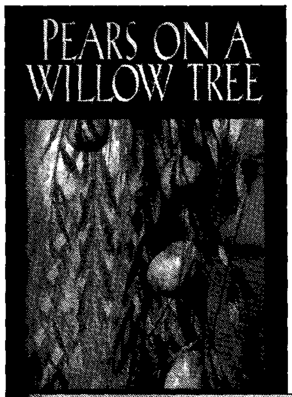
No more Kodak sign, no more huge clock, lots of architecture. You can wallow in the main concourse now; it is pure space. It's even tempting to say that Belle has treated the interior too much like a cathedral, especially since its original purpose, to serve travellers crossing the continent on great trains, has long been archaic. Grand Central is now just a big commuter station. And who needs all this architecture if you are merely heading for Stamford?

Well, nobody needs it. But without Grand Central, or with Grand Central reduced to being the base of a monstrous office block, New York City would be a vastly diminished place. Grand Central teaches us that monumental architecture can transcend issues of refinement and enrich the minutiae of daily life. The building, with its swarming crowds, is an oasis of calm, a serene eye in the midst of the swirling city. If you doubt this, look at how many people are not rushing through the main concourse but stopping to contemplate it. And it is somehow inherent in the nature of the space that, however large the crowds, people direct themselves around each other, intuitively; the concourse is not a hectic passageway of jostling throngs but an immense dance floor.

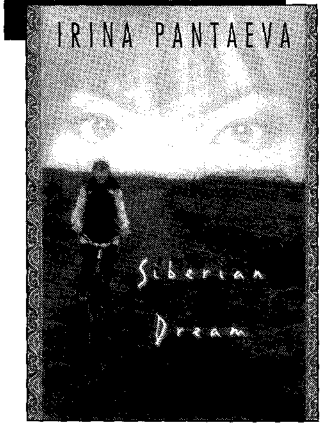
Now that Grand Central no longer functions as a place for long-distance arrivals and departures, it is more like a town square. Its clarity and its serenity, as well as its majesty, belong to everyone, and not, as they once did, primarily to those coming to board the Twentieth Century Limited. A transcendent experience is there for the taking, even if you're only walking through. ◆

(Advt.)

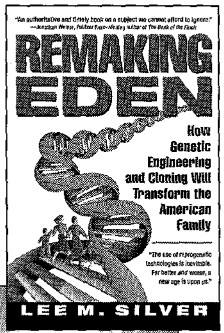
Our national tapestry is woven from the colorful threads of many diverse cultures. In her novel ***PEARS ON A WILLOW TREE***, author **Leslie Pietrzyk** celebrates the American experience through the saga of four generations of Polish-American women—beginning with the arrival of Rose Marchewka from the "Old World" and continuing on through the decades, as Rose's children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren struggle to come to terms with a life that is often incompatible with the traditions they have been taught to revere. Their stories combined are the story of our twentieth century, and a poignant appreciation of the roots that bind, define, and sustain us all.



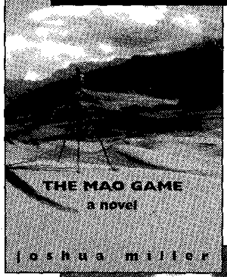
Irina Pantaeva's memoir, ***SIBERIAN DREAM***, is a true-life fairy tale—the story of a young girl, born into an indigenous Siberian culture, who escaped poverty, repression, and political turmoil to become one of the fashion industry's most exotic and sought-after supermodels. Irina's personal history is a tale of determination, grit and passion—one that opens windows into several dramatically different worlds; an odyssey of heart and spirit that ranges from the icy Siberian steppes, to a raucous and violently changing Moscow, to a world of glamour, prestige, and sparkle that remains an unattainable dream for all but a few.



Molecular biologist **Lee M. Silver** has seen the future—and in it, the natural human desire to have children and to provide them with all possible advantages will drive greater and greater scientific experimentation in the fields of cloning, genetic enhancement, and other reprogenetic technologies. In ***REMAKING EDEN***, Silver demystifies the science behind the thrilling—and terrifying—new technologies that will turn our notions of family upside down in the new world that awaits us on the other side of tomorrow.


REMAKING EDEN
How Genetic Engineering and Cloning Will Transform the American Family
LEE M. SILVER

In **Joshua Miller**'s acclaimed debut novel, ***THE MAO GAME***, a teenage Hollywood child star's life is spinning out of control—the combined result of his heroin addiction, his plummeting career, his grandmother's fatal illness, and the bizarre sexual predilections of his ex-football player father. Miller's unique pedigree—as a former child actor himself, the son of a writer/model and a Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright/actor, and grandson of a world-renowned photographer—has left him singularly qualified to write the quintessential "Tinseltown horror" novel, which bestselling author Frank McCourt likened in its power to *The Catcher in the Rye.*



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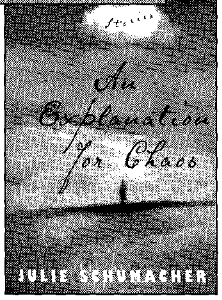

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THE GRAPE RUSH

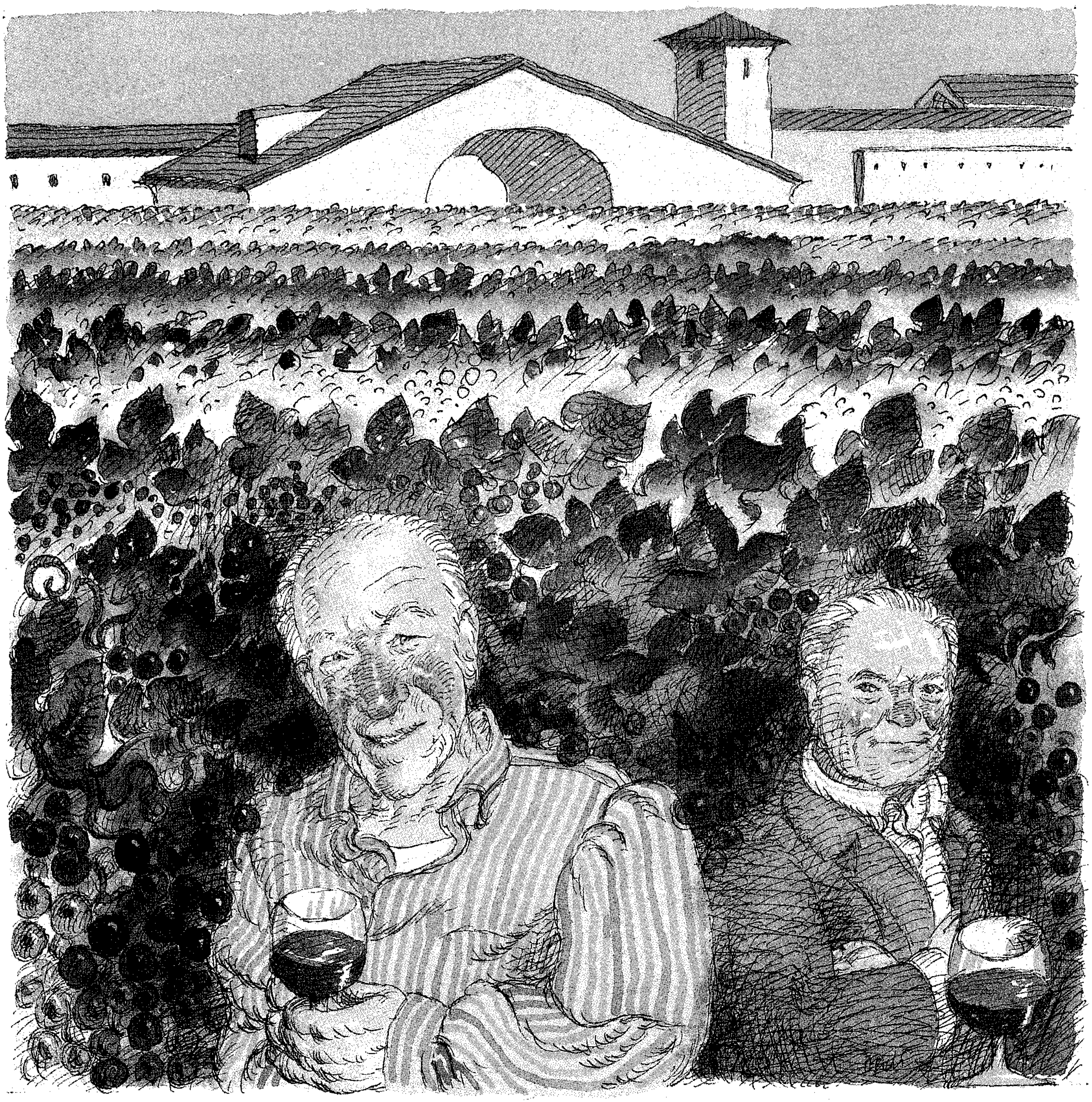
How Mondavi uncorked California.

BY JAY McINERNEY

NOT so long ago, the phrase "California wine" belonged in the same book of oxymorons as, say, "living poet" and "Dutch cuisine." You knew, on some level, that such things existed, but you didn't necessarily want any of them at your dinner table. Today, thirty-two years after Robert Mondavi founded his eponymous winery in the Napa Valley, wine has become California's second most glamorous export and Napa has become one of the world's celebrated wine regions. (Just ask Mondavi's neighbor, the winemaker Francis Ford Coppola.) Wine buffs and collectors from around the world put their names on waiting lists in the hope of acquiring a few bottles of the latest boutique Cabernet from Colgin or Screaming Eagle. A personalized Napa Valley winery has become a popular trophy for American plutocrats, and the formerly rustic town of St. Helena brims with the kind of polo-shirted tourists who also seek out Aspen and Santa Fe. Meanwhile, nearly all their fellow-citizens have learned how to pronounce "Cabernet Sauvignon." In his boosterish memoir, "Harvests of Joy" (Harcourt Brace; $27), Robert Mondavi doesn't take any less credit for these developments than he deserves.

Like his dowdier peers Ernest and Julio Gallo, Mondavi is the son of Italian immigrants. His father, Cesare, arrived in Minnesota in 1906 and, after a stint in the iron mines, opened a grocery store in a mining town called Virginia, where Robert and his younger brother, Peter, were born. Robert's description of their childhood might best be characterized as polenta pone: "Family; hard work; high spirits; healthy, hearty meals—my childhood was a daily infusion of all four." With the passage of the Volstead Act, in 1919, Mondavi senior became involved in the grape business. Under the terms of Prohibition, any family was permitted to make two hundred gallons of wine for home consumption, and the Italian residents of Virginia, Minnesota, elected to do just that, appointing Cesare Mondavi as their representative to travel to California and buy grapes to be shipped north. When Robert was ten, Cesare moved the family to Lodi, California ("the grape capital of the United States"). There he became a wholesaler of grapes and, shortly after Repeal, the co-owner of a Napa Valley winery called Sunnyhill, now Sunny St. Helena. Upon graduating from Stanford, in 1936, Robert decided to join the family business. Sunny St. Helena didn't grow its own grapes—it used only purchased grapes—but it did everything else: pressing, fermenting, and shipping the stuff out in railroad tank cars.

When Robert joined the family business, viticulture in the Napa Valley was a marginal enterprise. Fifty years earlier, however, Napa had seemed well on its way to enological prominence. The vineyards of France had been devastated by phylloxera, a tiny root louse, and the resulting wine drought presented an opportunity to California viticulture. In the late eighteen-seventies, state-of-the-art wineries were established by two German immigrants named Jacob and Frederick Beringer and a Finnish fur trader named Gustave Niebaum. Beringer Brothers and Niebaum's Inglenook were among the pioneers of a frenzied Napa grape rush; by 1887, more than sixteen thousand acres of Napa were under the vine, at which point the dread phylloxera struck the valley. Then, thirty years later, just when the root louse was being brought under control, along came the tambourines of the temperance movement. The dark ages of Prohibition and the Depression crippled the fledgling industry. Some of the wineries that had survived by selling grapes and altar wine damaged the reputation of California after Repeal by shipping spoiled wine that they had been



Robert Mondavi's split with his brother ultimately bolstered both his career and the fortunes of Californian viticulture.

holding during the dry years. In those days, most winemakers barely understood the chemistry of fermentation, according to the wine historian James T. Lapsley, "and they lacked the technology to control it even if they did." Most wineries were undercapitalized; there was no national network for wine sales and distribution. And there were few consumers. Immigrants who considered wine a staple of daily life often made their own. Most of the wine that came out of California—the product of high-yielding, inferior grape varietals—was a sweet beverage of the type that is now most commonly associated with brown paper sacks. And the shortcomings of these wines were only highlighted by the propensity of their manufacturers to adorn them with French names like Chablis and Burgundy.

Only a few visionaries recognized the great potential of the Napa Valley. One of them was the agronomist André Tchelistcheff, a former Russian aristocrat who, fleeing the Revolution, ended up in France, where he studied wine microbiology at the Pasteur Institute while holding down a series of jobs in the French wine industry. In 1937, he was hired as a winemaker by Georges de Latour, a native of Bordeaux who had become wealthy selling French rootstock to California grape growers and at the turn of the century had bought a Napa estate, Beaulieu Vineyards. Tchelistcheff brought French winemaking expertise and a sense of high purpose to the Napa Valley. Centuries of grape growing had allowed the French to parse the viticultural landscape into hundreds of regions and subregions based on nuances of soil type and microclimate. Tchelistcheff attempted to do something similar in Napa, identifying at least three climatic regions in the valley and replanting the Beaulieu Vineyards with the grapes he

TULLIO PERICOLI

deemed most suitable. From the end of the thirties until the seventies, his Georges de Latour Private Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon was a benchmark, and Robert Mondavi was among a number of winemakers whom he inspired.

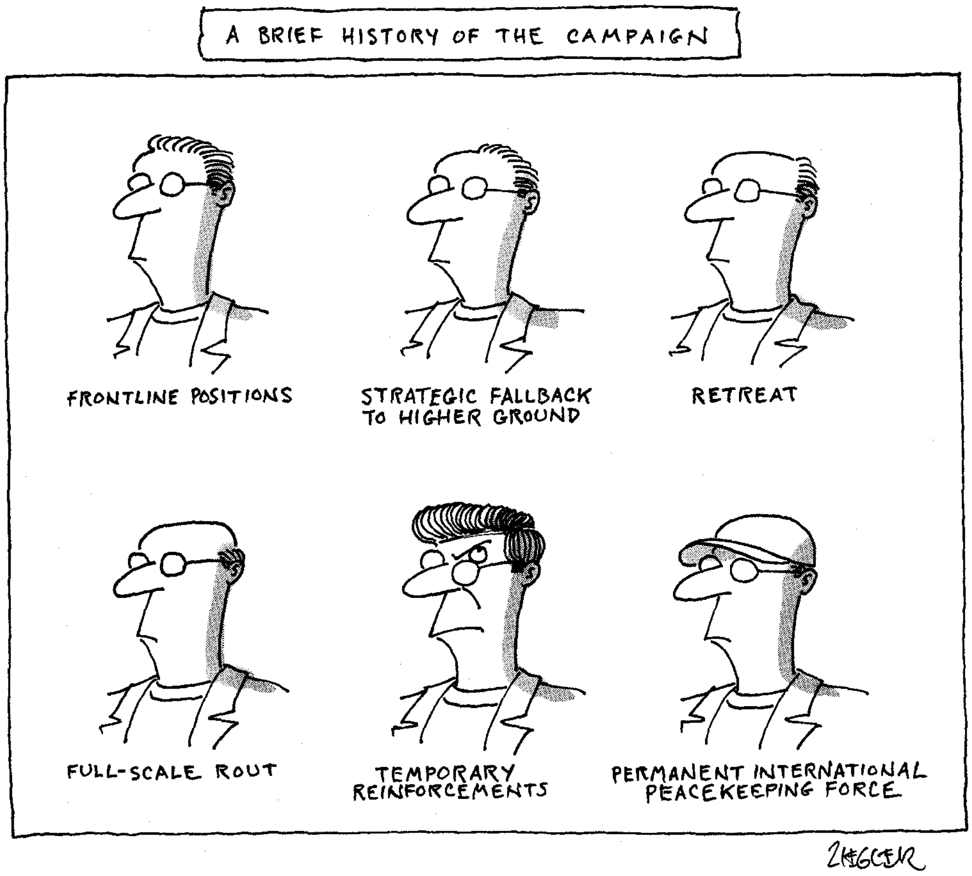
In 1943, when the Mondavi family moved upmarket by acquiring the Charles Krug Winery, Robert hired Tchelistcheff as a consultant. (He would turn to him again, a couple of decades later, when he went off on his own.) Despite plenty of winemaking experience, Mondavi has never really been the man in the cellar, though he has been very smart, and fortunate, in hiring winemaking talent. At Krug, it was his brother Peter who assumed the winemaking responsibilities. Robert was the public face of the Krug Winery, and a tireless promoter of his own product and of the Napa Valley in general. In 1952, Krug was among the first wineries to establish a tasting room for visitors, and when Mondavi wasn't entertaining visitors at the estate he was travelling the country glad-handing restaurant owners and distributors.

A power struggle developed between the two Mondavi brothers and led to the departure of Robert from the Charles Krug Winery: the valley's version of the Cain and Abel legend. As Robert tells the story, it all began when he first visited the great wine regions of Europe, in 1962, and experienced an enological epiphany. After touring the Old World châteaus and tasting the great wines of Bordeaux and Burgundy, "a great business and creative venture took shape before my eyes," he recalls. "I wanted to take American technology, management techniques, and marketing savvy and fuse them together with Old World tradition and elegance in the art of making fine wine." He returned to Napa all fired up: "I wanted my family and our company to commit ourselves to a true quest for excellence in our vineyards, in our winemaking, and in our marketing and sales." But, he says, his vision did not interest the rest of the family—which is really to say his brother, for their father had died in 1959.

According to Robert, it was a mink coat that started the war. In 1963, Robert and his wife, Marge, received an invitation from President John F. Kennedy to attend a state dinner at the White House. "Flattered though we were, Marge and I were very nervous," he recounts. "We were just small-town people running a small family business . . . How in the world would we fare at the Kennedy White House, with the charismatic President and his famous wife, surrounded by all the glamour of Camelot? Marge also had a more specific worry: What in the dickens should she wear to a White House dinner? What dress? What shoes? What bag? What jewelry? What coat?" Mondavi's admirers and his detractors alike will probably be astonished at this self-portrait of the king of Napa Valley as a shy, charisma-challenged bumpkin. About the shoes and the dress we learn nothing, but the couple eventually settled on a mink coat from I. Magnin, in San Francisco. "When he heard about that mink, my brother Peter couldn't understand it," Robert says. A snit became a sulk that simmered until it became a fistfight, two years later. At one of those big family gatherings that are so conducive to the airing of grievances, Peter accused Robert of spending too much money on travel and promotion. Then he accused his older brother of taking money from the winery. How else, he demanded, could Robert have afforded to buy the mink coat? "Say that again and I'll hit you," Robert warned Peter. He said it again. "Then I gave him a third chance: Take it back. 'No.' So I smacked him, hard. Twice."

The rift never healed. Many years later, the older brother triumphed in an acrimonious lawsuit. In the meantime, since their mother had sided with Peter, Robert, at the age of fifty-two, was on the street. He decided to start from scratch in pursuing his vision of producing world-class Napa Valley wines. It was a daunting mission, quite aside from the question of capital; in 1965, there was still no significant American market for the kind of wine Mondavi hoped to produce. Julia Child was still trying to wean Americans away from tuna casseroles and chipped beef. On the other hand, as everyone had long observed, the climate in Napa was practically perfect for ripening grapes, whereas the temperamental Gallic weather in Bordeaux and Burgundy resulted in vintages of wildly uneven quality.

After buying a piece of a well-situated old vineyard called To Kalon, Mondavi turned his attention to designing a winery that would make a statement. His architect, Cliff May, wanted to place the Mission-style winery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with its faux campanile far back against the hills, but Mondavi chose a spot within sight of Highway 29, where its yawning archway could attract visitors and serve as a kind of billboard for the enterprise. Its silhouette, which appears on the labels of Robert Mondavi estate wines, has since become iconic—at least as recognizable among wine lovers as that of the tower at Château Latour. Inside the winery, Mondavi presided over a series of technological innovations. He had been among the first winemakers in this country to use new French oak casks, in order to impart complexity and structure to Cabernet Sauvignon—a practice he had observed at the great châteaus of Bordeaux. But Mondavi also embraced American-style technology wherever he could, cheerfully calling his "the test-tube winery." Not surprisingly, America's first great wine region tended to rely heavily on science in the form of fertilizers, filters, and additives. The results weren't always happy, however. In the past, the California wine industry had been plagued by spoilage; in the attempt to make a clean, stable product, Mondavi and those who followed him went too far down the road of sanitation, filtering and sterilizing the living beverage almost to death. "Only later did we discover that this rigorous cleaning—part of what we call the suppression of fault—stripped the wine of vital essences, flavor, and character," he writes. Still, unlike many who adhered to the high-tech gospel of the Department of Viticulture and Enology of the University of California at Davis—which became a combination think tank and training ground for the industry during the seventies and eighties—Mondavi was always willing to reconsider, and curb his technological excesses.

THE event that certified the arrival of the Napa Valley as a major wine region didn't come until 1976, when the British wine connoisseur Steven Spurrier organized a blind tasting in France—the famed "Judgment of Paris." The tasting was to pit some of the most venerable French wines from Burgundy and Bordeaux against some of the Napa Valley upstarts, and Spurrier made a trip to Napa to handpick the American entrants. California Chardonnays were matched against white Burgundies—which are also made from Chardonnay grapes and are generally regarded as the highest expression of that grape. California Cabernets went up against some of the greatest red wines of Bordeaux, including a 1970 Château Mouton-Rothschild and a 1970 Haut-Brion. The judges, nine in all, were French, and their enological credentials were impeccable, which made the results all the more surprising. The top-scoring white wine was Mike Grgich's 1973 Château Montelena Chardonnay. Two of the other top four white wines chosen were also American. In the red category, the winner was Warren Winiarski's 1973 Stag's Leap Wine Cellar Cab. Naturally, the French were indignant. The French press at first ignored the results and later tried to explain them away. One or two of these dozens of explanations were remotely plausible. French *grand vin* tends to be made for the long haul and to show more awkwardly in youth than the ripe, flirty wines of California. Then again, the patriotic French tasters presumably would have been on the lookout for hints of California glitz. At any rate, the Spurrier tasting made an enormous impression on both sides of the Atlantic. Mondavi professes himself to have been "tickled to death by the outcome," but none of the representative American wines that Spurrier chose were his, and that had to rankle. Still, whatever frustration he felt at sitting out the big event must have been ameliorated by the fact that the two winners, Grgich and Winiarski, were alumni of his cellars. His vision for the industry had been resoundingly endorsed.

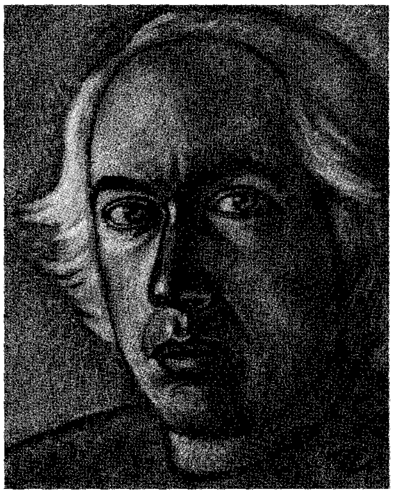
Mondavi has continued to expand and proselytize, seeming less like a voice in the wilderness and more like an elder statesman. His 1974 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve, released around the time of the great tasting, has become something of a legend. And in 1978 the French came calling. Baron Philippe de Rothschild, the proprietor of Château Mouton-Rothschild, invited Mondavi to participate in a joint venture in the Napa Valley. If Mondavi still needed vindication, this was it. Indeed, he can scarcely conceal his pride. "My parents came to America without a penny in their pockets," he writes. "Now, thanks to hard work and the ability to turn humble grapes into fine wine, the names Rothschild and Mondavi were going to stand side by side." Together, the two men built a limestone-clad, postmodern winery. Yet the venture nearly capsized: it was plagued by huge cost overruns, and consumers were initially skeptical about the wine, Opus One, when it was released at fifty dollars a bottle. And then, just a year after the first vineyards were planted, phylloxera struck again. The dread root louse swept through the valley during the next decade, wiping out millions of dollars' worth of vines. It was a mixed curse: the epidemic forced the vineyards to replant, but the new plantings tended to be genetically superior and to reflect advances in the understanding of climate, soil, and grape types.

The cost of replanting was one of the reasons that Mondavi decided, in 1993, to take the winery public. Shortly afterward, he appointed his older son, Michael, president, in an effort to end a long power struggle between Michael and his brother Tim, which threatened to become a replay of the earlier family feud at Charles Krug. "Harvests of Joy" only hints at the family dramas behind the corporate success story. Mondavi confesses that his fierce and single-minded ambition damaged his family, but he doesn't really show us how. His portrait of his saintly, silent wife, Marge, is typical: after buying the mink, she more or less disappears from the narrative. The reader is occasionally puzzled by flattering references to a Mondavi employee named Margrit Biever until, near the end of the book, Mondavi mentions that she became his second wife. And we learn little about his sons, who will lead this hugely successful company into the new century. One senses, if not a "King Lear," then certainly a "Rich Man, Poor Man" of viticulture awaiting its bard. If "Harvests of Joy" were a wine, we would have to say that it was a little disjointed, lacked complexity, and had too much residual sugar. But then it's entirely fitting that Mondavi's most eloquent message still comes in a bottle. ♦

A CHAIN UNBROKEN

How do we mourn our parents?

BY EDWARD HIRSCH



Leon Wieseltier

THOMAS J. CURRY

When his father died, on March 24, 1996 (Nisan 5, 5756, in the Jewish calendar), Leon Wieseltier set out, somewhat unexpectedly—since he had strayed from religious practice—to observe the traditional rituals of the Jewish year of mourning. This observance, as he makes clear in his new book, "Kaddish" (Knopf; $27.50), is a rigorous process. He went to synagogue daily to recite the prayer known as the mourner's Kaddish during the morning, afternoon, and evening services. When he was away from his home, in Washington, D.C., he found a visiting shul (Yiddish for synagogue) where he could pray. He would fulfill an ancient obligation. He would report to his mother—and to himself—that he had kept a difficult promise and done his filial duty:

> The Kaddish means to me that the survivor publicly manifests his wish and intention to assume the relation to the Jewish community which his parent had, and that the chain of tradition remains unbroken from generation to generation, each adding its own link.

A son, in Yiddish, is often called "a Kaddish," and one of the subtexts of Wieseltier's book is that the son "acquits" or "vindicates" or "vouches for" or "shows merit in" the father. ("This is the principle on which the mourner's kaddish is founded.") Another is that this particular son is following the traditional rites of mourning that could not be properly undertaken on behalf of his martyred grandparents or aunts or uncles, all of whom were murdered by the Germans "on that obscene day in that obscene month of that obscene year."

"Kaddish" is the result of Wieseltier's year of mourning. It is a brilliant book—odd, dizzying, learned, racked. It opens with abrupt sounds, the hard blows of his father's funeral: a door slams behind him in a formal black car, a shovel stabs a mound of dirt, a wooden coffin thuds into a pit. The son stands by the graveside, swaying and reciting the traditional Aramaic prayer that he is told to recite: *Yitgadal veyitkadas shmeme raba*. The mourner is so shaken that he scarcely comprehends what he is saying: "Magnified and sanctified may His great Name be."

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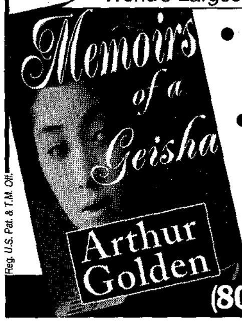

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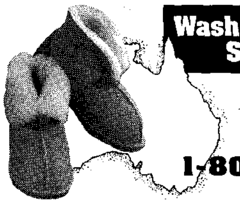

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alize us? In particular, how are wayward but diligent sons to mourn their lost fathers—the immigrants and refugees, the enraged lawgivers? This is an especially powerful question for those of us who have a voluntary relationship to religion, a relationship that is not automatically determined. Lucky are the wholehearted believers. Lucky are the ones who have never known an inconsolable grief, who haven't been orphaned, who haven't yet been forced to enact what Freud called "the work of mourning."

Wieseltier soon recognizes that he knows almost nothing about the arduous daily ritual that he is performing with such unexpected diligence, and he longs to find out more about it. "Sorrow, feed me," he writes, and it does. He stands before a wall of books and experiences the sheer immensity—the human plenitude—of Jewish learning. He turns to these old texts, to rabbinical commentaries from six hundred and seven hundred years ago, with such fervor that the quest itself becomes invigorating. As he puts it, "A season of sorrow became a season of soul-renovation." Love, for Jews, is nothing if not bookish.

Yet there is nothing cerebral about Wieseltier's book. He is no disinterested scholar arranging and systematizing his texts. ("I was fixed in my obligation," he writes, "but I was a rover in my tradition.") He throws himself into the old wisdom texts with a headlong desperation. He is starved and riven, he is (the phrase is Ruskin's) "unhinged by grief." He feels what he calls "the charisma of learning." The books are peonies closed and clenched with promise. He turns to them for guidance, and they do not disappoint him.

Some friends open a teahouse near Wieseltier's shul, and he repairs there daily to read the commentaries, to track down "the origins and the meanings" of the mourner's Kaddish (it seems to have originated in the thirteenth century, during the time of the Crusades), to rehearse the great debates surrounding it. Friends send him obscure books; the texts he needs bloom suddenly to hand; he feels "the angel of bibliography" guiding his way. At first, he worries that his mourning will interfere with his life, but soon he is concerned because the rest of his life keeps interfering with his mourning.

"Kaddish" is an urgent spiritual journal, a book of commentaries, a summary of findings. Wieseltier intersperses his reading with observations about his observance, about his fellow-mourners, about the small band of the faithful he has joined. He is beset by doubts about what he is doing as he moves between study and prayer, which he calls "the difference between thinking and feeling." He is sometimes exhausted, sometimes exalted by prayer, but he seems always vivified by study: "Back and forth from my desk to my shelves, ten, twenty, thirty times a day . . . The sweet savor rises from the pages. A delirium of study."

Wieseltier becomes what Wallace Stevens calls "the scholar of one candle." He looks down at his Hebrew texts and scents "words as spices, words as perfumes." He looks up and feels "the rustle of being." He has an aphoristic intelligence, and in a sense he is taking his place in a line of philosophers which runs from Pascal to Nietzsche and on to E. M. Cioran. "The history of Jewish civilization is the history of what can be accomplished in a ruin," he writes, and, "Tradition is not reproduced. It is thrown and it is caught. It lives a long time in the air." He delivers a special blow to the author of the idea that God is dead:

> When Nietzsche lost his faith, he concluded that God is dead. This is not critical thinking. This is narcissism. I understand the idea that if God exists, then you must believe in Him. I do not understand the idea that if you do not believe in Him, then God must not exist.

Wieseltier is a modern skeptic who keeps siding with old sources—who longs to be infected by their dimensions, to feel their amplitudes. He seeks the sublime, which Longinus calls our joining with the great. He comes to feel that the mourner's Kaddish is truly the "orphan's" Kaddish. Interpreting the scriptural authority Ovadiah, he writes:

> The son does not request that his father be granted a good fate. The son demonstrates why his father deserves to be granted a good fate. The son is not the advocate, the son is the evidence.
>
> I am the evidence!
>
> Examine me and forgive him.

As this "diligent and doubting son" repeats phrases from the Kaddish like a mantra, an ancient magnificence stirs in the text, and his brokenheartedness is balanced by his exhilaration.

"He taught me to be here," he writes of his father, "and here I am." ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

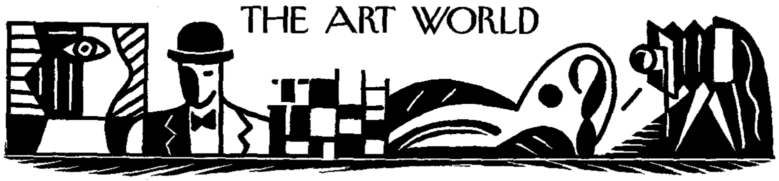
KAATERSKILL FALLS, by Allegra Goodman (Dial; $23.95). Goodman, the author of two collections of stories, is a writer of uncommon clarity and grace. In this, her first novel, the primary subject is the interlocking lives of a sect of Orthodox Jews who winter in Washington Heights and summer in upstate New York—among them Elizabeth, a mother of five who reads Tolstoy and Austen, and Jeremy, the Kirshner rabbi's doubting son. Goodman's handling of incident is masterly; even more remarkable is the way she makes use of her considerable gifts to illuminate, through action, the relationship between faith and free will.

MY YEAR IN THE NO-MAN'S-BAY, by Peter Handke, translated from the German by Krishna Winston (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $30). Handke's "excessive consciousness" is what sustains an epic paean to the *banlieue*—the "in-between spaces" of the Seine hills surrounding Paris. It is in this marginalized locale, inhabited by toads, muskrats, and the blue-collar regulars at the Bar des Voyageurs, that the narrator, an Austrian named Gregor Keuschnig, has installed himself to write. Keuschnig's exhaustively detailed meditation on the seemingly "unwinnable struggle" to transform the visible into the readable is leavened by his exposés of nameless friends and his estranged wife ("the Singer," "the Reader," "the woman from Catalonia") and his ceaseless wonder at his new surroundings: the desolation of a railway station, the flesh of a cèpe mushroom.

N. C. WYETH: A BIOGRAPHY, by David Michaelis (Knopf; $40). In N. C. Wyeth's art, Robert Frost noted the "strong bent toward the near, the homely, and the American," and in this dramatic biography a whole era of great and undeniably romantic American illustration is summoned up and represented. Michaelis's book, based on unrestricted access to family papers and candid interviews with family members, explores not only the destiny of a ferociously disciplined and conflicted patriarch but the lives of four generations of an American artistic dynasty. Wyeth's own tale proves to be as extravagant and memorable as the children's classics he so famously illustrated.

THE ENGRAFTED WORD, by Karl Kirchwey (Holt; $23). In his third collection of poems, Kirchwey skillfully mingles images of the ancient world with those of the modern, uncovering in antiquity an intimate present. Without straining, he can bring an episode from the Peloponnesian War to bear on a sonogram of his son, or find in the Gospel of Matthew a forecast of the boy's uncertain future, one in which "He will have nowhere / to lay his head, no matter how he builds." The Prix de Rome allowed Kirchwey a year to live and travel among the ruins, which, as he renders them here in classically elegant forms, seem to be his heart's natural habitat.

THE ART WORLD



THE ESCAPE ARTIST

A new Rothko retrospective at the Whitney.

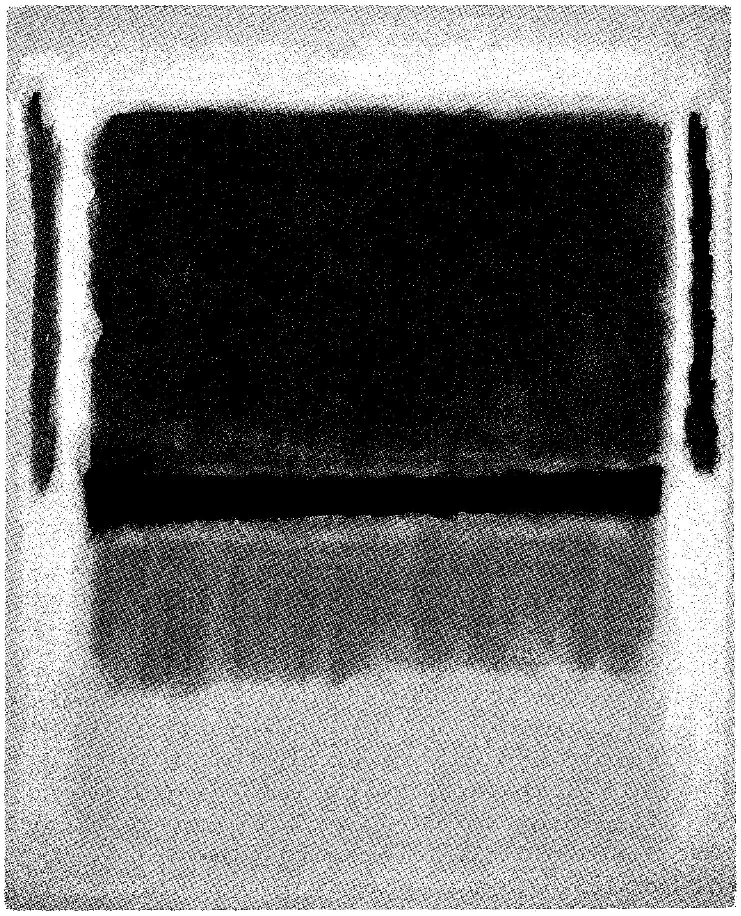
BY CALVIN TOMKINS

THE notion of art as autobiography, which has been getting a workout since the decline of formalist criticism in the nineteen-seventies, rarely sheds much light on the mystery of great art. Knowing about Picasso's erotic entanglements doesn't really help us respond, for example, to the paintings he did, in the same week in 1939, of Marie-Thérèse Walter and Dora Maar, and there is certainly nothing about the life of Mark Rothko that can explain the deep, oceanic pleasures evoked by the current Rothko retrospective, which opened at the National Gallery, in Washington, last spring and is now at the Whitney. Rothko was a lifelong, dedicated depressive who thought of himself as the "supreme pessimist." To judge from the authoritative 1993 biography of him, by James E. B. Breslin, he was miserable most of the time, and the years of his long-delayed recognition and subsequent fame were marked by failed marriages, broken friendships, poor health, heavy drinking, rage, guilt, and more or less predictable suicide—in 1970, at the age of sixty-six. To understand how this man could have produced the euphorically beautiful abstract paintings of his best years, from 1949 to 1964 or so, one is drawn back to T. S. Eliot's famous essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in which he argues that "the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates."

Rothko did not become Rothko until he was in his forties, of course, and there is more than a touch of autobiography in his earlier, semi-figurative work, a good deal of which can be seen at the Whitney. The awkward-looking couples, the faceless subway riders, the uneasy, oversized female nude whose head brushes the ceiling of an empty room—these images, painted in dull and dispiriting colors, suggest the cheerless tenor of a life lived within confining limits and on the edge of poverty. In "Self-Portrait" (1936), Rothko glares at us through tinted glasses, his mouth twisted into a near-snarl, his big hands clasped clumsily at the waist; he looks both truculent and vulnerable, which seems about right. By 1941, though, he had moved into his myth-and-symbol phase, taking his motifs from archaic sources and his methods, increasingly, from the European Surrealists who had come to New York to escape the war. Unlike Gorky and other New York artists of his generation, Rothko never really digested Surrealism. His borrowings from Miró and Tanguy look more like copies than like acquisitions, and the ambitious, large-scale works, such as "Slow Swirl at the Edge of the Sea," strike me as indecisive, with their finicky drawing and hesitant, nondescript color.

Then, quite suddenly, he was on to something new, unprecedented, and entirely his own. It began in the summer of 1945, with a series of pictures that later became known as "Multiforms"—abstract compositions of irregularly shaped blocks of color which appear to float in a shallow, luminous space. Myth, symbol, Surrealism, landscape, and every other outside reference have been banished. Over the next three years, Rothko continued to refine and simplify the format until he arrived, in 1949, at his great, signature style: a vertical canvas containing two or more colored rectangles that stop short of the picture's edge, so that they appear to float horizontally on a background of a different color.

For a month or more in 1949, Rothko went every day to the Museum of Modern Art to study Matisse's painting "The Red Studio," which the museum had recently acquired. Looking at it, he said, "you became that color, you became totally saturated with it." This was what he was after in his own painting, although, churlishly, he would get annoyed when people called him a col-



"Untitled (Violet, Black, Orange, Yellow on White and Red)," of 1949.

© 1998 KATE ROTHKO PRIZEL & CHRISTOPHER ROTHKO/ARS & SRGF, NY

orist, and would even tell his studio assistant that he was "not interested in color." His breakthrough was into color, however, and it is hard not to associate it with another sentence from Eliot's seminal essay: "Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality." Marcus Rothkowitz, a Russian Jew from Dvinsk who came to join his father and brothers in Portland, Oregon, when he was ten, lost his father to cancer six months later, dropped out of Yale after two years, became an artist on the eve of the Depression, and always felt like a despised outsider until, having grown successful, he felt corrupted and defiled by success—this same, sad Rothkowitz, now Mark Rothko, escaped to paint some of the most deeply satisfying works of the twentieth century.

In the large gallery at the Whitney where Rothko's paintings of the mid-fifties hang, the reverberating pulse of color makes your spine tingle. The deep, resonant reds and blues, the burning expanses of orange and yellow, the recurrent fuchsia and blackish green, tempered or intensified by black or white and by indeterminate hues that often seem to exist within another color—these are not colors harmonized, or orchestrated for a predetermined effect, but color itself, color liberated and breathing within the alternative world of the picture. Stand close to the paintings, as Rothko advised—eighteen inches was his preferred distance—and you can feel color as a physical sensation: close your eyes, open them, and register the slight, vibrating movement of the blurred rectangles on the retina. This is what Rothko meant when he said he painted big pictures in order "to be very intimate and human." No other artist of his generation established such close contact with the viewer. Rather than an object on the wall, each of his mature paintings is a place to be.

Rothko also wanted them to be seen as something more, of course, something beyond painting. "I'm interested in expressing basic human emotions—tragedy, ecstasy, doom, and so on," he said. "And the fact that a lot of people break down and cry when confronted with my pictures shows that I can communicate those basic emotions." Well, maybe so. I've never known anyone who breaks down and cries in front of a Rothko. Clyfford Still, Barnett Newman, and Rothko all suffered from a tendency to rhetorical afflatus, which rang hollow in the ears of the next artistic generation. To younger artists, it sometimes sounded as though the Abstract Expressionists had demanded to be taken seriously because they were so upset.

Rothko never needed the rhetoric or the quasi-religious claims to transcendence. His paintings of the fifties look as gorgeous, as complex, as mysterious, and as fresh as when he painted them; unlike Still's or Newman's, they haven't aged at all. "With Rothko, you feel the way he caresses the canvas," Ellsworth Kelly says in an interview included in the exhibition catalogue. "His painting seems to absorb color and to glow. . . . And as with all good painting, it gets better with time."

Painfully aware that the fifties pictures might be dismissed as merely decorative, Rothko began around 1957 to darken his palette. The wine-dark reds and maroons of the Seagram murals gave way to darker and darker canvases, with more and more black in them, canvases whose prevailing climate, strangely, is not gloomy or pessimistic but quietly, elegantly sumptuous. In the paintings that he did during the last two years of his life, he reduced his format to two rectangles, black over gray, and, instead of painting over the edges of the canvas, as he usually did, he taped the edges and then removed the tape to leave a white border on all four sides. These last works, drained of color and fixed in place by the white border, have been interpreted (the autobiographical fallacy again) as expressions of despair or premonitions of death, but they could just as well be seen as renewed efforts to escape. Having exiled himself from the paradise of color, Rothko needed another refuge from his disastrous personality; he may have been at the beginning of something new.

Once, in the fifties, Rothko got into an argument with Ben Heller, the collector, over the price of a painting. "Look," Rothko said, "it's my misery that I have to paint this kind of painting, it's your misery that you have to love it, and the price of the misery is thirteen hundred and fifty dollars." Seldom, if ever, as the Whitney show makes clear, has misery been alchemized into such enduring pleasure. ♦

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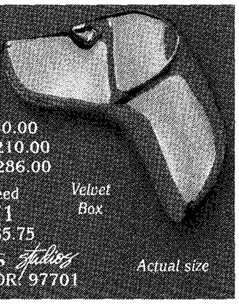

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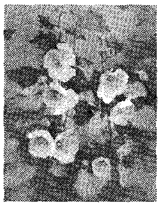

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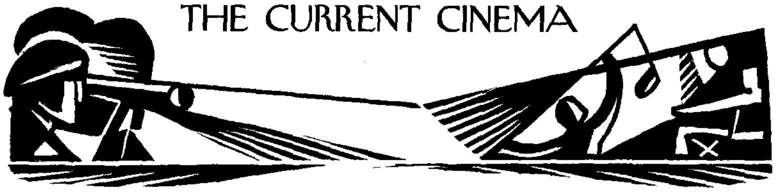


THE CURRENT CINEMA

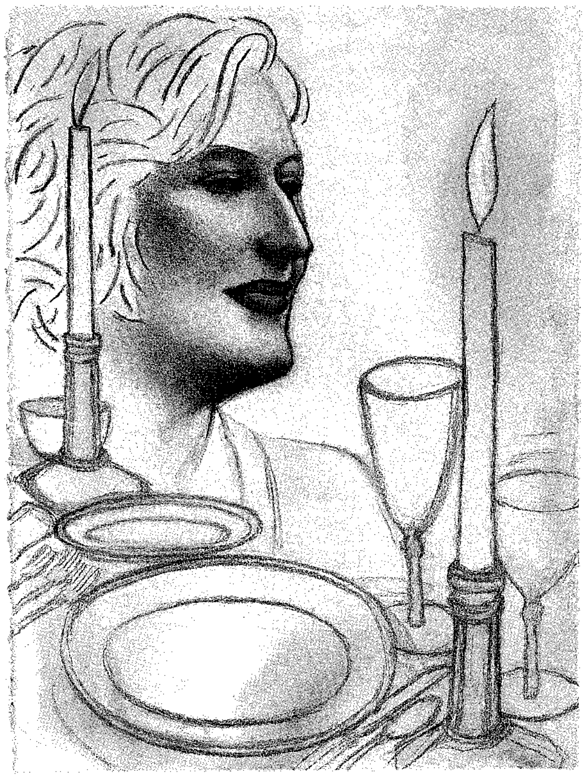
RETHINKING MOM

The return of the domesticated woman, and a wild Jewish son.

BY DAPHNE MERKIN

“One True Thing” is in many ways a standard weepie—the kind of movie you go to in order to be moved to easy tears by someone else’s tragically picturesque fate. The effect of such films is always the same: you feel good about the wetness on your cheeks (it proves you’re still a soft touch, after all) and then you go home and forget what you’ve seen. This time, however, something lifts the movie above its genre—something that points to one of those cultural shifts that films, almost unbeknownst to them, occasionally foreshadow. After years of cinematic attention to unmarried women, working girls, and fatally attracted predators, the pendulum may be swinging back. The domesticated woman, an object of scorn or neglect for at least two decades, has stepped out of the background and is once again getting her due as an interesting character—a star—in her own right.

Based on a novel by Anna Quindlen, “One True Thing” is a variation on the abiding American theme of the dysfunctional family and its misplaced heart. From the outside in, the Guldens look golden: the hyperkinetic Kate (Meryl Streep), when she’s not cooking or decorating, does good works with her women’s group, the Minnies. After years of marriage, her husband, George (William Hurt), still dances romantically with her to Bette Midler songs; he is an English professor who has won a National Book Award for his collected essays and is applauded by his pupils at the end of the semester. In the way of such families, Kate’s son, Brian (Tom Everett Scott), adores her, but her daughter, Ellen (Renée Zellweger), a journalist who writes for *New York*, has always felt closer to her perfectionist father. She doesn’t seem to mind his need to toot his own horn or his critical attitude toward her work; she listens respectfully to his suggestions that she “be more succinct” in her prose and to his reminders that he worked at *The New Yorker* at the age of twenty-four, where he would labor for a whole day on a single sentence. (He is also given to quoting Schiller and Thurber, the latter without attribution.)



Complex energy and simple wisdom: Meryl Streep at her finest in “One True Thing.”

MARTIN GUNSAULUS

Everything changes when Kate becomes ill with cancer, and George demands that Ellen come home to take care of her. Ellen, who barely tolerates her mother’s Martha Stewartish enthusiasms and “Hints from Heloise” approach to life, protests that she has a demanding career, but her father lays it on thick: “You got a Harvard education, but where is your heart?” Ellen reluctantly takes a leave from her unappealing boyfriend (Nicky Katt) and her job, and goes back to Langhorne, the small East Coast town where she began. Within days of her arrival, as Kate sleeps on the couch, this resolutely undomestic daughter whips up a meal for the Minnies’ annual luncheon: zucchini soup, chicken paillard, and Kate’s “heavenly” chocolate cake. Ellen continues to work on a plum investigative assignment, but she finds herself drawn more and more into the subtext of her parents’ lives. Watching her mother’s selfless involvement with her family and the community, which exists in stark contrast to her father’s preoccupation with his classes and his reputation, she discerns unsettling things: that George sleeps with his students and drinks away his disappointment about his unfinished novel, while her mother keeps things running for everyone. “How do you do this every day in this house,” she asks Kate, “and no one notices?” Father and daughter become more distant as Ellen burrows deeper into Kate’s world, making Thanksgiving dinner and helping her to craft ornaments for the village Christmas celebration. But Kate is not fooled; as she wastes away, taking morphine for her pain, she confronts Ellen’s unspoken judgments. “I want to talk before I die,” she says. “I’m tired of being shushed.” Looking every inch the messenger from beyond, with her gray skin and red-rimmed eyes, she offers her daughter the sort of practical wisdom that could never be found in the pithy remarks made by her husband’s intellectual gurus, summing up her life of determined good will (she accepts George’s philandering because “you make concessions when you’re married a long time”) with the simple observation “It’s so much easier to be happy.”

There is much to find fault with in “One True Thing,” beginning with an English-professor father who mangles prepositions (he asks Ellen why she’s been “so hostile with” him) and a small-town-in-a-bubble atmosphere that goes beyond "It's a Wonderful Life" nostalgia and into the surreal: the neighbors all love one another, the mayor doubles as Santa Claus, the youth are all clean-living, and the one concession to multicultural reality is the presence of a token black Minnie. The structural device of having Ellen recount the whole story to a district attorney who is investigating the circumstances of her mother's death adds an irritating dimension of false mystery to a movie that is anything but suspenseful. There is, too, something oddly muffled about the film's psychodynamics, as if Carl Franklin, the director, had decided to understate a very message-driven script in the hope of adding artistic lustre. Hurt is good at conveying George Gulden's remote, self-infatuated charm, but there is something so youthful and undeveloped about his laid-back, "Big Chill" style of acting that he could easily have passed for Ellen's brother. Zellweger struggles valiantly with a difficult, unendearing part—Ellen, for all her sophistication, sees things in clichéd terms—but falters at moments of intensity. When she is called upon to get angry or hurt, you can see her scrunching up her face, acting from above the neck instead of drawing from something inside. None of this matters in the end, though, because Meryl Streep is a revelation. It's as if she had gone and cleaned everything out—all the technical virtuosity that enabled her to change accents and inhabit wildly differing roles with ease. The trouble with Streep, for those who came to resist her (as I did), was that one was always aware of the brilliance of the impersonation. Here she slips inside the skin of Kate Gulden with such unflashy empathy—and reinvests the figure of the mother and wife with such complex energy—that you can't take your eyes off her. She's familiar in an alien fashion, and she looms large, even after she's gone, the way mothers have done since the beginning of time.

THERE'S another piece of dazzling acting—this time by Ben Stiller—in "Permanent Midnight," which was written and directed by David Veloz. Based on an engrossing, shamelessly candid memoir by Jerry Stahl, the film is set in a Hollywood not dissimilar to the town of deluded talents and boundless ambition that was evoked in Robert Altman's "The Player." Ben Stiller plays Jerry, who is every Jewish mother's nightmare—a promising son gone berserk. A struggling writer, Jerry has fled New York "to get away from drugs," only to develop a six-thousand-dollar-a-week habit in Los Angeles. He marries Sandra (Elizabeth Hurley), a decorative but soulless Brit who needs a green card to continue working in TV, and she helps him get a job on a puppet sitcom, where his outrageous, drug-addled sense of humor boosts the show's ratings. Meanwhile, he moves from quaffing Percodan to shooting heroin; nothing and no one can stop him from getting his next fix, not even his infant daughter in a car seat. Jerry narrates this sorry saga to Kitty (Maria Bello), a sympathetic blonde who picks him up while he's undergoing rehab in Phoenix. They go to a motel, where they trade addiction stories and have oblivion-seeking, "Leaving Las Vegas"-style sex. But at the film's end he is alone, in black leather as always ("It's Jewish leather," he explains to Sandra when his pants split at their first encounter, "designed for humiliation"), looking morbidly toward the prospect of a long, debt-ridden life. If a movie as relentlessly dark and anarchically funny as this one can be said to have anything as wholesome as a message, it's that it takes as much energy to go down as it does to go up, and that self-destruction requires a talent all its own. ♦

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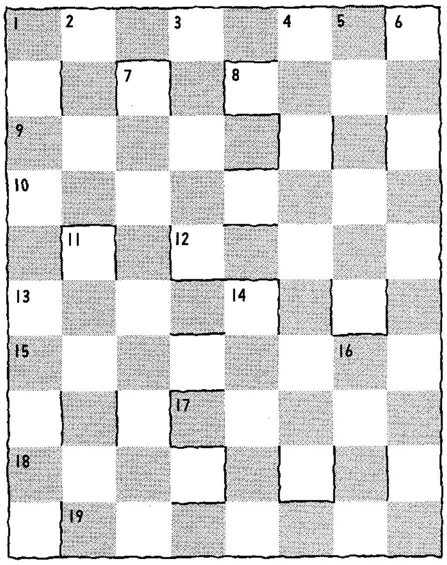


ACROSS

- **1** Object to nonsense embraced by annoying person (7)
- **8** Pilot holds right amount of land (4)
- **9** Monsters seen in progression (5)
- **10** Prophet confines a distant traveller in a boat (8)
- **12** Sailor is turning ankles (5)
- **13** Colorado company with a hot beverage (5)
- **15** Leading lady's featured in "Exploitation" (8)
- **17** Source of gold ring: actor Sal (5)
- **18** Obligation on America (4)
- **19** Distinctive writer's pen tip (7)

DOWN

- **1** District attorney writing before court is out of order (10)
- **2** Rookie's first period fury (4)
- **3** Felon's taking the fort (5)
- **4** Rat eating Indian food and running around (9)
- **5** Most accurate advice ultimately kept in confidence (6)
- **6** Confirming famous drummer at university, amid sound of a drum (7,3)
- **7** Expand fight surrounding Western spread (6,3)
- **11** United Nations captured by chief naval officers (6)
- **14** Lear clumsily grabbing one character in Shakespeare play (5)
- **16** Basketball team sent all over (4)

• •

The solution to puzzle No. 59 appears on page 41. For a free copy of "The New Yorker's Guide to Solving Cryptic Crosswords," please send your fax number or a stamped, self-addressed envelope to "Solvers' Guide," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. For an electronic version, send an E-mail to puzzleguide@newyorker.com.

SHOUTS & MURMURS

THE BOOK OF JOE

BY STEPHEN SHERRILL AND PAUL TOUGH

"Managing the Yankees to a championship in 1996 was special to Joe Torre, but he says he feels he is part of something extraordinary this season."—*The New York Times.*

May 25th, 34 wins, Joe Torre: "These last three days have been unbelievable, swinging the bats the way we have. Wow. I don't know what to say."

July 8th, 61 wins: "I am a little surprised by the record."

August 4th, 80 wins: "I have no clue what that's all about. I'm just happy and enjoying it."

August 7th, 82 wins: "I say 'Wow' a lot, either to myself or out loud. This ball club keeps coming at you."

August 9th, 84 wins: "It's weird."

August 10th, 85 wins: "I'm amazed at what's going on."

August 16th, 90 wins: "It does stagger me. It's incredible to think of ninety wins by the middle of August. It's a heck of a bite."

August 18th, 92 wins: "Every time we come in here after a game, you find out you're either tied with somebody or we just did something that happened fifty years ago. Now you tell me we did something for the first time. That's hard to believe."

September 2nd, 99 wins: "It's something you never could have imagined in spring training."

September 4th, 100 wins: "This is all new ground to me."

September 22nd, 110 wins: "Sometimes I feel like this is all just some enormous joke. And on the last day of the season, someone's going to say, 'Just kidding, you're actually 80 and 62, or 81 and 61, or whatever.' " *

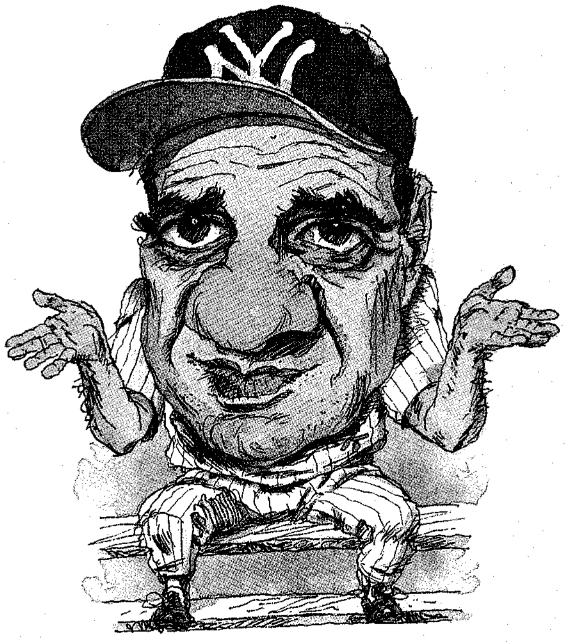
September 23rd, 111 wins: "I have no idea what's happening." *

September 24th, 112 wins: "I don't think I can talk to you right now. I just need to go home and tell my family that I love them. I advise you to do the same." *

September 25th, 113 wins: "This is just stupid." *

September 26th, 114 wins: "If Joe Torre could explain this, Joe Torre would be a very, very wealthy man." *

September 27th, 115 wins: "They should shorten the season to keep teams from winning so many games that it surpasseth human understanding." *



September 29th, Division Series: "I sat down today and started counting—not out loud, but to myself—the number of wins we had. Took me quite a while." *

September 30th: "Well . . . Knoblauch got a coupla dingers . . . and I guess Boomer . . . had some pretty good . . . stuff." *

October 2nd: "The world's gone mad. We are all God's tiny playthings." *

October 6th, American League Championship Series: "After the game, I look at Zimmsy. He says maybe Stottsy can explain it, and Stottsy thinks maybe Steinsy can. But he couldn't either." *

October 10th: "O! that this too, too solid flesh would melt, thaw, and resolve itself into a dew! Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd his canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! O God!" *

October 13th: "This is certainly more wins than I would have expected." *

October 17th, World Series: "[Expletive]." *

October 20th: "I don't know who they are or what they want from us, but clearly someone—or some*thing*—is trying to send us a message." *

October 22nd, Yankees win World Series: "I'm scared. Hold me." * ♦

JOHN CUNEO

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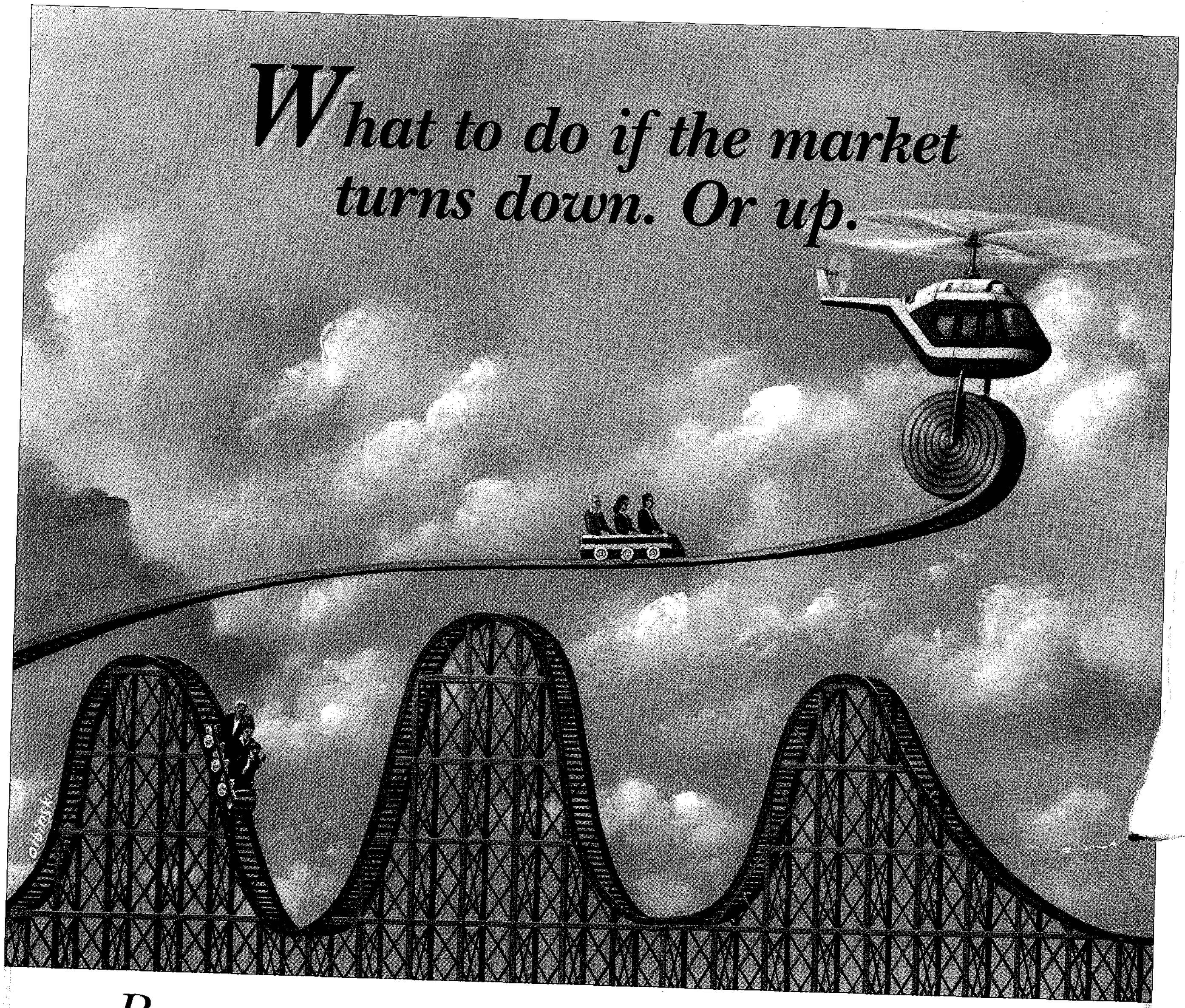
* Projected.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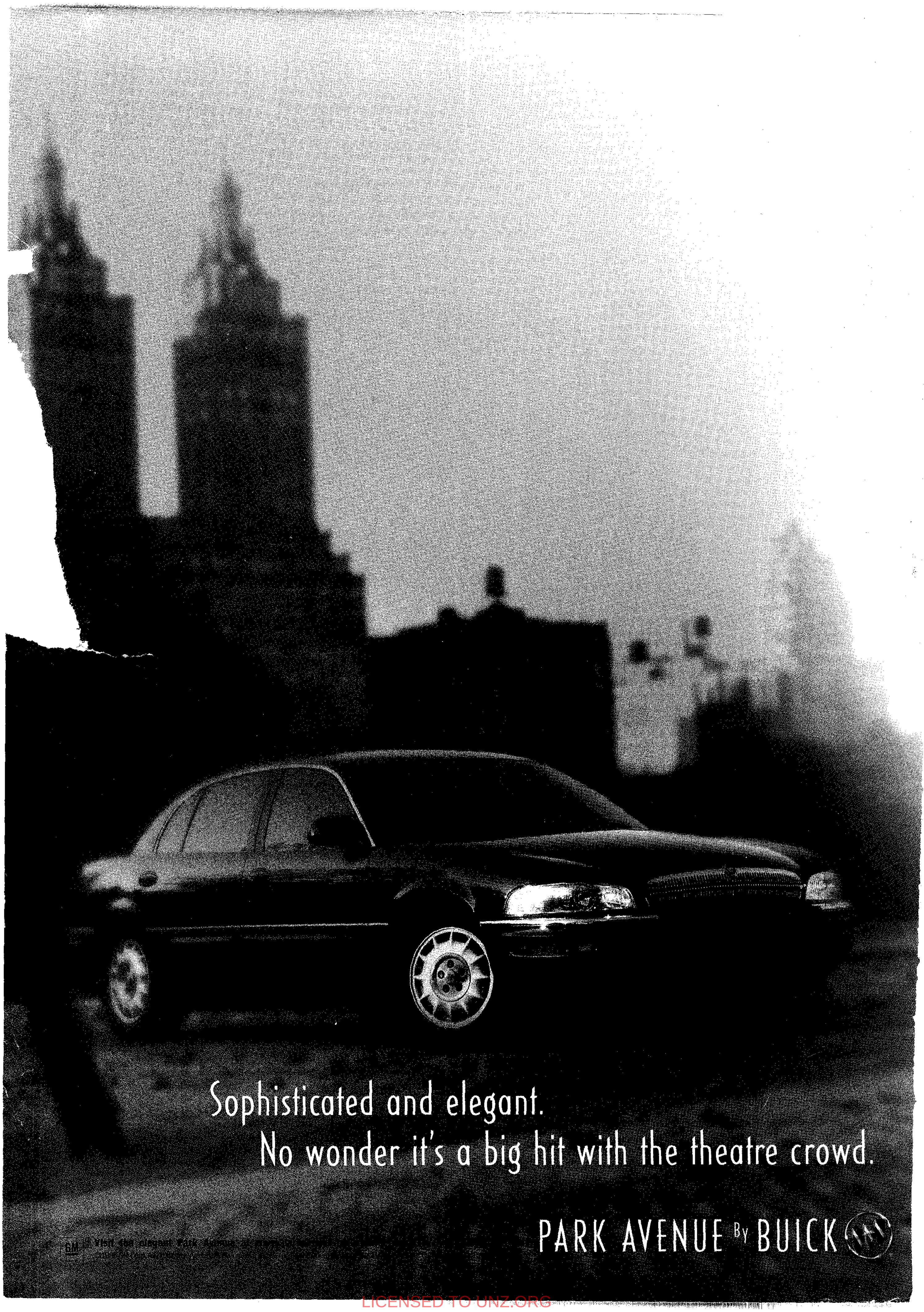
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